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THE

MONEY-LENDER.

BY

MRS. GORE,

AUTHORESS OF "MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS,"

"THE MAN OF FORTUNE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE MONEY-LENDER.

CHAPTER I.

So light is vanity!

SHAKSPEARE.

"BUT when I tell you," cried the inconsiderate Lady Winterfield, as Basil drew near,—(little suspecting that a third person was within reach, to note the artifices by which she was attempting to recommend herself to the hard heart of the Money-lender,)—"when I tell you that this is the last time I will ever trouble you with an application?——"

"You have told me the same thing, Ma-

dam, these half-a-dozen last times!" replied, in his coldest and most deliberate voice, the imperturbable Abednego. "I had the honour of assuring you, during the hurried visit you made to town from Brighton, before Christmas, that it would be totally out of my power to accommodate you further. My advances already exceed the value of the jewels deposited."

"Nonsense!—Don't I know the sum of money they cost Lord Winterfield, on our marriage, only five years ago? I have still by me the jeweller's bills, which I can shew you!"

"Can you also shew me the jeweller's conscience?" retorted Abednego. "Such articles are invariably sold at two-thirds beyond their intrinsic value. To convince you, Madam, of this, so far from making you a further loan, I am most anxious to replace the diamonds in your keeping, on receiving back, with interest, the amount advanced on such security."

"You say this," cried Lady Winterfield, pettishly, "only because you know that it is utterly out of my power to return it. You are aware that nothing but extreme necessity ever compelled me to place the jewels in your hand; and now, you insult me by wishing to recal a loan you are aware that I cannot repay!—How do you suppose, pray, that I am to obtain such a sum of money?"

"*That* is your ladyship's affair.—When, by your tears and entreaties, you extorted it from me, you assured me that your embarrassments were temporary, and that you would very shortly be able to clear yourself."

"Yes!—of course!—I said all that is usually said to Money-lenders——"

"All that may be usually said to Money-lenders by fashionable Countesses in distress. But I can assure your ladyship, strange as you may think it, that there *are* persons in the world who hold sacred the redemption

of their honest word, even when pledged to a Money-lender.—With respect to the extreme necessity you urge as a plea for placing in my hands your family jewels, I must be permitted to say that I have seen your ladyship's establishment, that I have been allowed the honour of entering your ladyship's drawing-room,—very different, I admit, from my own," continued A. O., glancing round the cold, wainscoted, unfurnished room, the boards of which were covered with a square of discoloured Scotch carpet,—"but equally far from inspiring me with compassion for the destitution of the owner!"

"We are bound, in this world, to keep up the decencies of life due to our position in society!" interrupted the Countess, in a haughty tone.

"I thoroughly agree with your ladyship," was the fearless reply of Abednego,—"and it is precisely for that reason I have it at heart to see the valuables of the Countess

of Winterfield removed from the custody of a money-lending Jew."

His lovely visitor blushed to the temples at this unexpected retort, but more in anger than in sorrow.

"A step lower in the scale of degradation," calmly resumed Abednego, "and they would appear among the unredeemed pledges in a pawn-broker's window!—Think of the brilliant Countess of Winterfield presenting herself at Court with duplicates in her pocket!"

"You presume upon my necessities to insult me thus!"—cried the indignant woman, roused by this terrible sentence.

"Necessities, Madam, permit me to observe, wholly of your own creation! I am not unfrequently compelled to witness the woes of my fellow-creatures,—ay, even those of your own sex. But how different is their nature from those of which you complain! Trust me, there are severer pangs in the

world than arise from the rumpling of the rose-leaf!—I have seen mothers of families struggling for their children's bread;—I have seen devoted wives beggared by the improvidence of their husbands, yet exerting themselves diligently, humbly, and silently, to extricate themselves from ruin. Such misfortunes, Madam, and such penury, I respect. Nay, I have known well-born women subject themselves to wretchedness and privation, for the sake of their lovers, —and even *those* I have respected!—But I have neither respect nor pity for the wantonness of waste that purports only the entanglement of frivolous admirers. The display intended to deceive some unhappy dupe into offering you his hand, moves only my contempt. If you must needs have an opera-box, for the young Marquis to sit beside you throughout the evening as throughout the morning,—if you must needs have a succession of showy dresses, to enhance your beauty to secure these danglers,—if

you must needs have brilliant equipages to fly about the town,—to wander from races to breakfasts,—from Greenwich parties to pic-nics at Ken Wood, (your ladyship perceives that I am tolerably well versed in your movements!)—have them at other cost than mine!—I have no money to throw away on the maintenance of your follies."

Lady Winterfield started up.—Galled beyond endurance by the humiliations thus inflicted upon her, she resolved to obey the harsh injunction of Abednego, and seek assistance elsewhere. But, alas! a moment's reflection served to remind her that she had already sought it, and in vain;—that she had no resource—no hope—save in the insolent rebuker of her faults. She submitted, therefore,—rendered docile by the iron pressure of necessity. In a moment she subdued her temper, and humbled her pride,—reduced to tameness, like the beasts of the field, by the pangs of privation.

"You are most severe upon me," said she,

in the pretty coaxing voice that none knew better how to assume when her purpose needed,—" though perhaps not more so than I deserve. But when I assure you that, if you persist in refusing me this five hundred pounds, I am utterly ruined—ruined both in fortune and reputation——"

" My refusal will not render your ladyship a shilling poorer than you are now. In what way, therefore, can you charge me with your ruin?"

" You will have, at least, exposed it to the world."

Abednego shrugged his shoulders. " You expose yourself, Madam," said he, " by using such arguments. Once for all, I repeat, that you are wasting the substance of others, and of your children, merely to keep up false appearances in the world. So long as you enjoy luxuries which you do not and cannot pay for, you are shining at the cost of your coachmakers, jewellers, milliners, money-lenders,—the abject obligee of

humble tradesmen. At this moment—woman and Countess as you are—you stand before me as an inferior !—Though you may be a Countess of the realm, and I the vilified A. O., I rise above you as a capitalist, I rise above you as a moralist, in whose hands you have placed weapons of offence."

It was now the turn of Lady Winterfield to shrug her shoulders; but with impatience rather than contempt.

"Last week," resumed Abednego, careless of the variations of her countenance,—"there came hither to me a woman young and lovely as yourself, who, like yourself, had exceeded her means and broken her engagements. She came hither to me, not like your ladyship,—hoping to move me to pity by the sight of her loveliness and her affected despair,—she had other arms for the combat; and those arms, Madam, prevailed. To *her* I assigned thrice the sum of her original debt, and at my own instigation."

"And of what nature were those arms?" demanded Lady Winterfield, colouring deeply, and, by casting down her eyes, shewing that she was prepared for expressions of gallantry and admiration on the part of one whom she loathed like a harpy.

"It avails little to explain," replied Abednego, with an ill-repressed smile of exultation, as he rose from his chair and approached her: and the blood of Basil Annesley boiled in his veins, and he pressed his knee closer upon the wooden bench, while inclining his eyes towards the grated aperture, "for they are such as it were, perhaps, unbecoming so great a lady as the Countess of Winterfield to put to profit."

"I am willing to use any arms,—make any concession," faltered the fair bankrupt,—a deadly paleness succeeding to her previous flush, as she contemplated the growing audacity of the Money-lender.

Abednego folded his meagre hands carelessly before him, and, throwing back his

head, stood contemplating her from head to foot, with a smile of indescribable expression. It was impossible to behold a more lovely woman; and the Money-lender gazed upon her as if taking an appraisement of her charms.

"The arms to which *I* alluded are not at your ladyship's disposal," was at length his sarcastic reply. "For they were tears of genuine remorse for an involuntary breach of faith;—they were the worn and haggard looks which labour and want impose upon the fairest face. She was a woman of the people, Madam;—like you, left young, a widow,—like you, with helpless children dependent upon her prudence. She told me —and her mien attested her veracity—that for them she had toiled day and night,—for them abstained from food and rest. But the outlay that was to set her up in business, (borrowed of one of the agents of A. O., and at usurious interest,) was still unrepaid. She was still poor, still insolvent,

still needing indulgence; and came hither, like the fashionable Countess of Winterfield, to beg for mercy!"

Greatly relieved, even while writhing under the severe lesson imparted by Abednego, the fashionable spendthrift gasped for breath.

"I granted it," resumed the harsh admonitor. "And I granted her also my respect, —almost my affection. The old Moneylender soothed her as a father might have done, and sent her home in peace and comfort to her children.—Yours, Madam, will have less to thank you for.—I will not expose you,—I will not pursue you with the rigour of the law. But I choose to retain in security for the property of mine which you have squandered, the diamonds pledged to me, to that effect; and without affording you another guinea in extension of the loan, —aware that neither that, nor millions, would impede your ruin and disgrace."

"Then I am lost!" cried Lady Winter-

field, losing all self-possession, and unable to restrain her tears.—"Those precious diamonds——"

"Those diamonds, Madam, you do well to prize," resumed Abednego.—"They were the bridal gift of one who bestowed his heart upon you, confiding in the promise of a fair exterior;—who entrusted his honour to you, believing in the truth of your affections;—who, on his dying bed, bequeathed his children to your care, believing that all his love and confidence could not have been bestowed in vain. You do well, therefore, to prize the tokens of his love. But, trust me, they are safer in *my* keeping than in your own."

"But if I can obtain from some other person upon them,"—persisted the humbled woman, clasping her hands in intercession, while tears streamed wildly down her cheeks, —"a sufficient amount to repay you what I have borrowed, with the additional sum needful to repair my shattered affairs!"

"You *cannot!*" interrupted Abednego, "I have weighed them to the uttermost carat, and the most liberal diamond-merchant could not afford you in purchase within fifty pounds of the sum you have received from myself as a loan. Few better lapidaries in this town than myself!"

"But if you would permit me to *try!*" persisted the lady, half remonstrating, half wheedling.

"No, Madam!" replied the Money-lender, with a significant smile. "You are not to be trusted with such valuable property. I could place those diamonds in the hands of the poor workwoman of whom I spake, with a far more sanguine hope of their safe return, than in those of the Right Honourable Countess of Winterfield!"

At that moment, there recurred to the mind of Basil Annesley, a vision of this brilliant woman of fashion at the sale at Rochester House, laughing and talking amid a group of the most distinguished noblemen

of the day, to whom her smiles conveyed rapture, and to whom her merest word was a law.

"Then nothing remains for me but *death!*"—cried the distracted lady, throwing back from her face her silken ringlets, intermingled with the filmy drapery of Brussels lace attached to her tiny French bonnet. "May you never live to repent, Sir, the injury you have this day inflicted upon me and mine!"

"People rarely give up the ghost a day the sooner for threats of self-destruction,"—replied the unimpressionable Abednego. "Your ladyship will, I trust, live long,—long enough for retrenchment,—long enough for repentance!"

"Remorseless man!"—cried Lady Winterfield, even in the midst of her genuine tears, unable to renounce her habitual affectation. "Will *nothing* move your obdurate heart? Must I implore you on my bended knees?—Must I——"

"Spare yourself these exaggerations, Madam," coolly interposed Abednego. "I am too much used to listen to the pourings forth of human passion, not to decide in a moment what feelings are genuine,—what assumed to move my compassion. Want, Madam, possesses an iron key to the innermost recesses of the human heart,—the recesses where eloquence lies glowing, like the lava within the volcano;—and that key is often turned in my presence. The merchant trembling for his credit,—the soldier for his honour,—the husband for the peace of his fireside,—mothers who would screen the faults of their children,—children tortured by the necessities of their parents,—all these, Madam, plead to me in turns, and often plead in vain. Judge, therefore, since I can resist the manly struggles of an upright man on the verge of bankruptcy,—of a wife agonized by the prospects of an honourable husband's imprisonment and shame,—whether I am likely to be touched

by a few graceful attitudes arising from the extortions of a milliner's bill, or the claims of a compounder of fashionable cosmetics?"

Lady Winterfield started up with an indignation of wounded pride, far more genuine than her attempts at pathos.

"I was a fool," cried she, "to expect from a *Money-lender* the sentiments of a *man!* Do, not, however, fancy that you will trample upon me with impunity. You may be compelled to restore those jewels by higher authority than mine. My lawyer assures me you are liable to prosecution for usurious practices against me;—my lawyer assures me you are far more in my power than I in yours. Since you choose to declare war against me, take the consequences! —I promise you that, with all your vulgar effrontery, you shall have the worst of it."

Abednego smiled sarcastically at this sudden transition from the fine lady to the virago.

"I am almost beginning to feel alarmed, Madam," said he. "Suffer me to ring for your carriage. It will be a relief to my terrors, as well as to your emotions."

He rose from his seat as he spoke; and for a moment, Basil Annesley apprehended that, by one of those effects of legerdemain, (of which he was now beginning to be ever in expectation when dealing with A. O.,) the host and his visitor might find it necessary to invade his retreat to secure egress from the house.

But it was not so. Scarcely had Abednego touched the bell lying on his bureau, when an opposite door was partially thrown open, by a brazen-fronted clerk, (having a pen behind his ear, so admirably fitted to the locality that it seemed to have come with him into the world,) who instantly fixed his hard, light-coloured predial eye scrutinizingly on the lady, as though the habit of officiating for the Money-lender had endowed him with the power of reading in

the faces of his clients the success or failure of their mission.

"See this lady to her carriage, Raffles," said Abednego, assuming his usual place at his bureau, with so determined an air of attention to business, as conveyed a sentence of dismissal. "Her ladyship is in haste."

Too proud to exhibit to a low subordinate, probably as impracticable as his employer, the misery gnawing at her heart, Lady Winterfield drew the Brussels lace closer round her face; and, by an habitual impulse of affectation, lifting her silken pelisse from the ground, as if afraid of contact with the vulgar earth, quitted the room, escorted by her singular esquire; who, throwing open wide the folding doors, probably in derision, as if to give passage to some august personage, revealed to view beyond a handsome apartment richly hung with pictures.

It was evident, therefore, to Basil that he was ensconced in the unsuspected issue of some substantial residence. Remembering well the sudden apparition of the Money-lender as if emerging from a panel in the wall, when he himself first sought him as a client, he doubted not that some similar den had enabled Abednego to watch and surprise his actions. Indignant at the idea of this treachery, he was not sorry to have retaliated upon Osalez, by becoming an unsuspected witness of his privacy, before he gave him warning of his involuntary presence in the trap.

Scarcely had the door closed upon the Countess, when, flinging down the pen by which he had signified his decree of dismissal, he resumed his place in his arm-chair, throwing himself back into it with an expansion of self-indulgence, as if luxuriating in the idea of the torture he had been inflicting. Rubbing his withered hands with an air of exultation, a hearty

laugh burst from his leathern cheeks, the hollowness of which thrilled to the marrow the frame of the warm-hearted young auditor.

"Dreadful!"—was the shuddering response of Basil to the triumphant laugh of Abednego. But before he had time to pronounce his purposed warning of the presence of an intruder, the opposite door was again thrown open; and Annesley felt instantly revolted by the apprehension that the unfortunate victim of folly and frivolity might be returning for the fruitless renewal of her supplications. It was a relief to him when the bold-faced clerk entered alone.

"And what amount of bribe did the pretty fool offer you, by the way, eh! Raffles,—to induce you to influence me favourably in her behalf?" demanded Abednego, still chuckling.

"You seem to have an instinctive insight into these matters, Sir," said the clerk, with a facetious grin. "Her ladyship

offered me ten per cent, if, through you or any other Money-lender, I could effect a levy for her. It was unnecessary to apprise so fine a lady that it is worth your while to pay me so liberal a salary to be honest, that honesty is every way my best policy. Poor soul!—I was almost sorry for her on handing her into the spicy-looking turn-out waiting for her opposite the counting-house door."

"Keep your pity, my good friend, for worthier objects," cried the Money-lender, proceeding to sort some papers on the table beside him. "I have been giving the foolish woman a lesson she will not easily forget. To no purpose, however—a mere waste of eloquence! The moth will singe her silly wings again,—nay, probably perish in the flame,—the first opportunity."

"Scarcely five-and-twenty, (to judge by her appearance,)" cried the confidential clerk,—"yet already debased by transac-

tions with the Jews. It is afflicting! It is positively afflicting."

"Her ladyship's bright eyes seem to have wrought the charm upon the *man*, which they had attempted in vain to work upon the *master!*" cried Abednego, with a sneer. "You are growing as soft as a bale of cotton, Raffles! Take heed, my man, or you will become unfit for your employment. However, since this cunning hussy seems to have touched your compassion, you shall even carry her the cheque, by means of which I intend to prevent her, not from flinging herself into the Serpentine, or buying two-pennyworth of ratsbane, (of neither of which feats she has further purpose than you or I,) but to preserve her already tarnished name from becoming as black as such excess of levity on the part of the mother of a family might well render it. I have intimated to one of her brothers, —a gallant man, to whom her honour is

dear—the mad course she is pursuing; and till he arrive in town, am bound to exercise some providence over her destinies."

"You intend, then, Sir, to accede to her request for this further loan?" said the clerk, evidently astonished. "You will please to remember, however, that I have duly apprised you the security is already exceeded."

"I know it—I know it! Curse the security! Have I not security twice as sterling in her dread of exposure?"

"But if she have not the means of paying, however much exposed?"

"Her family have. The pledge of a name such as hers is as good as diamonds or gold-dust. But at what are you grinning, Sir?"

"At the idea of all the invectives so uselessly wasted by the Countess, between this chamber and her carriage."

"Ay!—I can imagine the torrent of abuse she let forth against poor A. O.; the

way with them all! Unless one consent to be fleeced like the rest of their creditors, one becomes dog,—curmudgeon,—robber,—JEW! The poor initials of A. O. have been made the object of more execrations, I suspect, than any other combination of the letters of the alphabet."

"But surely, Sir, since you intended to oblige her, you might have spared her the terrible moments of suspense she has had to undergo?"

"And the sermon that preceded it, eh? No, no, Raffles! It is *because* I intended to rescue her out of the jaws of perdition, that I had the courage to reprove. I am too cruel, eh, to these young and tender sinners? I tell you, it were as reasonable to tax the surgeon with cruelty who amputates some gangrened limb to preserve the life of a patient! But enough of this. Let her have her money before five o'clock. By the way, cash the cheque I have written, as you go along the Strand,—which will

secure her from the humiliation of presenting the draught of a Money-lender. She will attribute my relenting, of course, to the eloquence wrung out of you by the influence of her proffered ten per cent. Ha! ha! ha! Better so! It would be the ruin of me if I got the reputation of being chicken-hearted. By the way, you have given instructions, I hope, to Cognovit, to proceed against the old Viscount?"

"I have, Sir."

"And to make out a writ against——"

Basil Annesley now shouted so loudly as to disturb the equanimity of both the Money-lender and his clerk, for he had no wish to pry more extensively into such transactions as he foresaw were about to be disclosed.

"Who the deuce is in the pigeon-hole?" demanded Abednego.

"It is certainly not the voice of Zebedee!" replied Raffles;—and before Basil could reiterate his signal, part of the wall seemed to

recede beside him; the moveable panel, dividing the trap from the council-chamber of the Money-lender, being withdrawn.

The confidential clerk instantly collared the skulking stranger.

"Your pistols, Sir—your pistols!" shouted Raffles to his superior,—"'tis some house-breaker,—some burglar. I have him fast!"

"Loose him again then,—and thank your stars that your noisy zeal has not tempted me into shooting through the head one but for whose aid you would have been now thrown masterless on the world!"—cried Abednego, who, having snatched a pistol from his bureau and confronted the open panel, instantly descried through the doubtful light, that it was no other than the young guardsman, who was struggling in the grasp of his deputy.

"I have sought you in many strange places, Mr. Osalez," observed Basil, calmly stepping into the room, on finding himself released, "and found you sometimes in

others equally strange, where your presence was wholly unlooked-for. On the present occasion, I had no intention of becoming a spy upon your actions. Though in search of you and at your own desire,—I swear to you that I knew not, when I was thrust into yonder disgraceful cell, to what sort of retreat I was proceeding."

"No need of an oath to confirm your statement!" replied A. O.,—not in the slightest degree embarrassed; "since, unless favoured by the pass-key of one of my agents, it had been impossible for you to wind your way into one of my most secret places of resort. Nevertheless, since you are beginning to affect compunctions of conscience about visiting the den of a Money-lender, it may not be amiss to remind you that, once upon a time, a certain Mr. Basil Annesley——"

"Visited, on a similar errand, a certain A. O.!"—replied the involuntary spy. "But I came not *then* as a friend,—I came not, as now, to——"

"You came *then*, PRECISELY upon the errand as *now!*"—retorted Abednego, firmly. "You came, and come, in the hopes of benefiting Verelst. Nay, wherefore deny it? Can you exhibit a better passport to my regard than solicitude for the welfare of my sister's family?"

The astonished clerk lost for a moment his professional air of callous effrontery, in utter amazement,—first, at hearing the old Money-lender address, in a tone of affectionate interest, a well-dressed young man of Basil's manners and appearance; and, secondly, at an avowal of kinsmanship with any mortal living on the part of A. O., whom he had hitherto regarded as an insulated being—a sort of mysterious automaton composed of gold and arithmetic, who was equally likely to have emerged from the Great Pyramid or from St. Giles's Charity School,—so utterly disconnected did he appear from the ordinary associations of life.

It was highly mortifying to the astonished

and inquisitive Raffles, when, a moment afterwards, Abednego signified his desire to be alone with his handsome young visitor; and, apparently on his guard against the habits of duplicity he had inculcated into his subordinates, followed him gravely across the dining-room as he retreated, and carefully locked the door upon him after his departure; an unmistakeable signal, in that mysterious establishment, that no possible emergency, short of the house being on fire, was to entitle the people of the Money-lender to intrude upon his privacy.

"And now," said Abednego, after returning to the room, and reinstalling himself in his sanctum, "seat yourself, I entreat, and let us have a few minutes' unmolested conversation."

"Excuse me," replied Basil, glancing through the still open panel along the dark corridor,—"I have left my horse yonder in the street, under the care of an utter stranger——"

"Under the care of one of my confidential agents, or you would not be here!"—retorted Abednego. "Fear nothing! Zebedee has something of a taste for horse-flesh. It was him I employed to seize the Duke of Rochester's stud at Newmarket. The fellow will take good care of your hack."

So saying, he closed the panel, by a spring, and came and sat himself down over against Basil, in the arm chair in which he had mused so exultingly after the departure of the Countess of Winterfield.

But with his usual tact of discrimination, he instantly discerned the unfavourable impression made on the young man by the scene he had recently witnessed. Young Annesley was cold, unexpansive, uncordial,—neither disposed to receive with applause the biting jests of his companion, nor listen with respect to his homilies. The open-hearted soldier seemed resolved to demonstrate his consciousness of being in the company of a professional Money-lender.

For some minutes, Abednego attempted to wrestle with this sudden mistrust; but finding all his efforts to raise a smile or command attention abortive, he suddenly burst forth into a more genuine strain.

"I see how it is!"—cried he. "I have lost your regard,—I have lost your friendship. The warm interest of a young heart like yours fell like dew upon my old age,—reviving feelings I had never expected to find re-existent in my withered heart! And already the fountain is dried up,—the desert again parched. Master as I am of millions, that first spontaneous impulse of human sympathy towards me, I prized above them all! And now, you hate me! I see it in your face,—I hear it in your voice, or rather in your silence! Do not deny it,—Basil Annesley, you are on the verge of loathing and despising the unfortunate A. O.!"

"*Unfortunate!*" reiterated Basil, with a smile.

"Ay, most unfortunate!" — reiterated

Abednego. "A victim from his birth—*before* his birth,—a foredoomed outcast,—a predestined paria,—a——"

"Pause for a moment, Mr. Osalez," interposed Basil. "Far be it from me to surprise the secrets of your prison-house. Reflect, I entreat, before you enter into rash confidences which you may be hereafter disposed to repent!"

"No!" cried the Money-lender, his countenance evincing tokens of uncontrollable emotion. "The time is come!—I feel that I cannot support the withering weight of your contempt. I must speak or die! I *must* vindicate myself. Let there be, at least, one human being entitled to examine and dispassionately judge, the real position and provocations of Abednego Osalez.

"In that name, Basil, consists the secret of my destinies!"—resumed the Money-lender, after a pause,—"for it is that of a JEW!—incontestably that of a Jew. Comport myself as I may, in accordance with all

Christian canons,—though I may fear GOD and love my neighbour as myself—nay, though, as St. Paul hath it, I give my body to be burned,—what profiteth it to me? I bear a Jewish name! My patronymic smells of the Synagogue. I am a Jew,—I *must* be a Jew,—the world avoucheth it, and who is to gainsay the world? Opinion—vulgar opinion hath placed me among the children of Israel. Basil Annesley,—such is the influence that hath overmastered the impulses of nature,—such is the social tyranny that hath made me what I am!

"Listen to my story!

"I was born,—as Verelst has probably informed you,—the only son of a wealthy merchant of Cadiz, trading with the whole commercial world, but chiefly with England,—my mother, and my father's mother, being alike natives of that country. It was, in fact, on the marriage of my grandfather with a young Protestant of honourable extraction, a countrywoman of your own, that he re-

nounced the church of his forefathers,—thereby entitling himself to all the charities and indulgences of the Christian faith.

"His recantation was an act of pure conviction; for my grandfather, rich as a Doria or a Medicis, was a man of spirit and intelligence; and even the passion he had conceived for the daughter of an English admiral, would not have beguiled him into a capitulation of conscience.

"By his conversion, he turned, of course, against himself the hands and hearts of his own people. He made enemies of kith and kin. All those in whose veins his blood was flowing soon proved, to him and to the world, that those kindred drops were converted to the bitterness of gall. Had he not a right, however, to conclude that the church to whose bosom he had betaken himself would strive to heal the wounds inflicted by their malice? Had he not cause to believe that the newly-converted Christian would be, by Christians, Christianly entreated?

"It was not so. In Cadiz, where he abided, the people were at that time illiterate bigots; and to the end of his days, my grandfather's sumptuous mansion was pointed out by the populace as that of 'Osalez the Jew.' Had he embraced the Catholic faith, the case might have been different. But the burnt-offerings of his zeal smoked not on the altars of their cathedral,—and they consequently persisted in opprobriating him as 'Osalez the JEW!'

"Of that time I remember nothing! My grandfather died soon after I saw the light; —but I remember overhearing legendary whisperings by our fireside, betwixt his venerable widow and my father, of the times when, on any occasion of popular tumult, it became essential to conciliate the populace by prodigal benefactions, lest they should attack and spoliate, in the harbour or on the quays, the vessels or merchandise of 'the Jew of Cadiz.'

"Was this rational? Has not the God

of Christians expressly declared, that there is more joy in Heaven over the sinner that repenteth, than over the ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance? And which, I pray you, hath done more for the Christian church,—the man who sacrifices the love of kindred, and the predilections and belief of his ancestors, to cling to the Cross,—or he to whom a lukewarm *faith* is transmitted by his forefathers, who accepts it unexamined, yet prospers under the green olive groves of ecclesiastical protection, while the Jewish neophyte is compelled to drag, as a burthen in the dust, the galling weight of that Cross, which he hath voluntarily and zealously adopted?

"Again I ask, Basil Annesley, is this rational? But when was the population of a priest-ridden country ever rational? My father, who, at his mother's desire, had been educated in her native country, was deeply affected by the mistrust and evil dealing. In England, therefore, did he linger, even

after his education was completed. In England, did he love, and wed, and become a father; nor was it till after my birth, that the sudden death of his father compelled him to return to Cadiz.

"Fain would he, from that moment, have extricated himself from commercial life,—realized his property, and established himself permanently in the land of religious freedom and scientific enlightenment. But it was impossible! His capital was so widely diffused,—his foreign connexions (especially with the English colonies in the East) were of so widely spreading a nature,—that the remainder of his life was expended in attempting to destroy the root of these ramifications, in order to abjure the merchant craft.

"Nothing more heart-gnawing than the bitterness engendered by consciousness of a defeated purpose. Osalez—'the *son* of the Jew,'—though the wealthiest citizen in Cadiz, while his vessels were hailed in every

port of Europe, and while his voice decreed the existence of plenty or famine for hundreds of thousands,—was a miserable man. The corn, wine, and oil, in his rich warehouses conveyed no food to his soul. In Spain,—in Catholic Spain,—he seemed to stand aloof from the community, as his father had done before him. He became a widower; and not the poorest of his brother merchants would have been content to bestow his daughter in marriage upon 'the son of Osalez the JEW!'

"Again I ask you, Basil Annesley, was this rational? My poor father, fancying that in England,—liberal England,—such prejudices were unadmitted, still looked forward. The time would come, he fancied, when he should find a successor rich enough to undertake his speculations, and invest millions in his vast undertakings; 'And then, my boy,' was ever and ever his cry, 'then will I set up my staff in the happiest and freest country in the world. England

is the land of commerce. *There* the origin of our opulence will be respected; and the estates, in the purchase of which I intend to sink the greater portion of my capital, will give you a stake in the country entitling you to a voice in its legislation. You shall have a seat in Parliament, Abednego! With your talents, and the education that is to perfect them, you may achieve public distinction, and become the founder of an honourable family.

"I could almost wish *now* that I had bestowed on you at your baptism a name savouring less of the repellent origin of our ancient house. But when you were christened, the old man my father was yet alive; and I shrunk from inflicting a pang upon his warm heart by appearing ashamed of the name he had inflicted on myself,—which was his own, and that of the father of his father. To the unlucky appellative of Abednego I have been myself indebted for half the odium attached in Cadiz to 'the son of

Osalez the Jew.' Nevertheless, whenever that title of reprobation meets my ear, I think of my father's grey hairs, and am content;—so may it be with yourself!—Should you ever have to smart under its contumelious application, recal to mind the motives of your parents, and be patient.

"Such, Basil, were the views of this excellent man in affording me what is esteemed the first of English educations, at a public school, and the university. He could bear to part with me; for he was again wedded, and the father of a little girl, whom he had piously named Rachael, after the custom of his family.

"I was a smart and forward boy. From my infancy I had received in my father's house that best of schooling, the society of the wise and liberal. The table of the rich Osalez was open to all that was enlightened or distinguished in his native city;—the Grand Hidalgos, whom it was so often in his power to oblige—the Archbishop—the

Governor—the Commandant—the noblest and best in the place. The appointments and entertainments of our house were sumptuous as those of the merchant-princes of Italy; and to what level will not the meanness of empty pride descend, for the indulgence of its sensual pleasures! I quitted Spain for England with the impression that we were a great and powerful family; and that I should find elsewhere, the consideration and obsequiousness I had met with from the guests and dependents of my father.

"The haughty boy was destined to a rough lesson! Shall I ever forget that first week at Eton!—Shall I ever outlive the recollection of the swelling heart with which I nightly retired to my pillow, after hearing reiterated around me the opprobrious cry of —'Abednego the Jew!' In the course of the first day, not one of my young schoolmates but had inquired after my brothers, Shadrach and Meshech! The bed I was moistening with my tears was called the

burning fiery furnace;—and not a morsel of my food but was embittered by offers of a slice of pork, or other savoury meats the object of Jewish abomination!

"At length I turned upon my persecutors. Like other badgered schoolboys, I tried, in the first instance, the force of my puny arm, and fought, and was first beaten in the ring, and then chastised for having fought! I bore all bravely; because my triumphs as a scholar already afforded me a prospect of humiliating my adversaries with the force of higher weapons. I felt greatness struggling within me. My aspiring soul resolved to raise itself above the level of the gibbering lordlings by whom I was despised.

"'They shall hear of me yet—they shall *feel* me yet!' was the inward suggestion that spurred on my lagging scholarship, till I became an object of general wonder; my English verses, my proficiency as a Grecian, being equally themes of praise. The masters began to cite me among themselves as

a youth of singular promise, likely to distinguish himself in public life!

"Then came the habitual rejoinder—'Poor fellow!—with such abilities, it is a thousand pities he should be a Jew.'

"'But he is *not* a Jew—neither he nor his parents!' was the indignant retort of the head master.

"'Impossible!—*the name!*—Abednego Osalez!—Besides, look in his face,—*only* look at his face!—Eyes,—features,—hair,—there is Jew impressed in every lineament!'

"The first time remarks of this description reached my ear, I recalled to mind, with bitter consciousness, the air of sadness sometimes overspreading my father's countenance, as he gazed on my own. Often, when addressed by his parasites with laudations of my personal beauty, I had heard him murmur, while they were admiring the Oriental fire of my eyes, or glossy blackness of my hair, 'Would, *would* that he had inherited

the northern fairness of his poor mother!—My face may prove a disastrous portion for that noble boy!'

"Prophetic words, Basil,—as the taunts of my school-mates, and more polished irony of my college companions, soon taught me to my cost!

"Still, though wounded and smarting, I was not desperate,—I hated my name,—I detested my origin, as the source of unjust aspersions;—but I did not yet *hate* the world. Just as my father and grandfather had said, in extenuation of the scoffs and mistrusts of Cadiz,—'These people are ignorant and priest-ridden; their insolence merits only our pity!'—did I say in my turn,—'Why heed the sarcasms of boys and striplings? The award that is to determine my position in life must be pronounced by men and women!'

"But of the spell included in that latter word, Basil, little did I then know to estimate the power! At Oxford, politics be-

came my favourite study. The burning ambition of my soul was to distinguish myself in Parliament. I doubt whether the most fervent patriot ever panted with fonder desire for an occasion of serving his country, than I for the honours of senatorial renown. I was convinced that on the walls of the House of Commons hung the escutcheon of my future ennoblement. It was there I had to win the laurels destined to replace the absence of an hereditary coronet;—

"*There*, either I must live, or have no life!"

"Never, for a moment, did I mistrust the strength of my own powers. Like the Pythoness, I was conscious of the divinity within me. I felt myself to be master of my own destinies, and, through *them*, of the opinion of the world. It was my ambition only to raise myself to the level of my fellow-creatures; to redeem myself from unmerited obloquy. The desire to set my foot

upon the neck of mankind arose in later life. As yet, I dreamed only of what appeared easy of achievement: and, so long as the illusion lasted, was at peace with myself, and with the world!

"The covert insults that sometimes assailed me, fell unnoticed on my ear. The name I was about to create for myself, would soon, I fancied, obliterate that of Abednego Osalez!

"Alas!—how should I have shuddered—how recoiled with horror—had any one, at that period, presumed to predict to me the humiliating career of the future —A. O.!"

CHAPTER II.

> Their hate was yelp'd against me
> With the unmeaning rage of some wild dog,
> That bays at shadows!
>
> FORD.

IT was not till after a pause of some minutes, during which the irritation of the Money-lender appeared somewhat soothed by the sympathy and interest manifested in his recital by his young companion, that he resumed,—in a less-excited tone and manner:

"Mankind are more what they are made by mankind than what they are made by their Creator!"—said Osalez. "The wolf is ferocious because hunted from a whelp .

The snake turns upon you, because you disturb and pursue it. The child grows surly, because unjustly coerced. But, above all, man becomes unjust and cruel, because pursued with cruelty and injustice by his brother man. I was born, imbued with the original sin of human nature; yet certain am I that there were noble purposes in my soul, which the scorn of my fellow-creatures converted into wickedness. The germ of goodness was there; but, watered with poison, it brought forth deadly fruits!

" Full of eagerness,—full of trust in myself and others, I entered into life. My father made me a splendid allowance,—an allowance doubling that of the richest nobleman at the university; and though this told against me in one sense, by the perpetual citation of ' The rich Osalez—*rich* as a JEW!'— it enabled me to confer obligations ensuring me hosts of fashionable associates.

" For them, I was only ' Osalez,'—Osalez

who had such famous hunters, such capital wine, and such a knowing curricle always at the service of his friends;—and to *be* my friend was consequently the pretension of half my acquaintance. Those who delighted to dine and drive with me, or rather *for* me, introduced me to their families; and by degrees I became (on sufferance, though I little suspected it) a favoured guest in the *beau monde.*

"I was happy, young, handsome,—as handsome as the Jewish physiognomy, which my grandfather's conversion could not efface from our hereditary nature, would permit. I was admired,—flattered,—followed,—nay, fancied myself *beloved!*"

"And why not?" said Basil Annesley, courteously, fancying that his excited companion paused for the encouragement of a kindly word.

"Why NOT? Because my name was ABEDNEGO,—and because I looked like a Jew!

"Listen Basil! I had won the highest honours of the university; and before entering the Parliamentary career, to which, at that period, money secured the entrée, I thought it my duty to visit my father. Would I could adequately describe the rapture with which he welcomed me, and the pride he took in my proficiency! Would you could have seen the passionate admiration of my poor little sister, and the partial kindness of my step-mother! In that household, more splendid than almost any of those I had left in London, I was a demi-god!

"I would fain pass over that epoch of my life!" said Abednego, in a lower voice. "The reminiscences it must awaken, may possibly expose me as a weakling in your eyes. Nevertheless, to enable you to judge my cause,—all—all must be disclosed.

"It was winter, Basil. Leaving my hunters at the disposal of my shallow friends, I hurried to Cadiz, at a season when its cli-

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mate is peculiarly grateful; and, after long immurement in the murky realms of Great Britain, dear, indeed, was my delight in the softness of that southern atmosphere, and the fragrance of its long-forgotten orange blooms. Till then, I had not imagined the intensity of enjoyment which pleasures so purely physical can impart!

"But they were *not* purely physical!—I enjoyed them so keenly, only because I shared them with another, — another — young, fair, noble, generous,—already dear, and soon to become dearer than life!

"The family of an English nobleman was passing the winter at Cadiz, for the benefit of the health of an only son, who was supposed to inherit a consumptive tendency. One of his lordship's daughters—one of his three daughters——"

Again, Abednego paused; and Basil Annesley, in spite of his eager and growing interest in the narrative, had the forbearance to entreat him once more to desist from his

painful task. But at that suggestion, Abednego resumed his firmness.

" Till my arrival at home," said he, as if assuming a peremptory mastery over his emotions, — " these people — these noble exiles, had been overcome with *ennui*. With the exception of her to whom I have alluded, not one of the family was mentally endowed to find satisfaction in the mere beauties of nature, or the attractions of a strange country. Both father and sisters repined after the pleasures of the fashionable world; hungering and thirsting for news of society,—the gossip of the clubs,—the frivolities of aristocratic life.

" They welcomed me, therefore, with delight. The splendid entertainments of my father, to whom his lordship had brought letters of introduction as to the first merchant of the city, and in one of whose mansions he was domiciled, assumed a new charm in their eyes. They were constantly in the society of my step-mother, who was a

pleasing and accomplished woman; and I—I who appeared to belong to a world which, as regarded Cadiz, had hitherto been exclusively their own,—was admitted into their circle as a familiar and honoured guest.

"How I loved her, Basil Annesley,—that youngest and fairest daughter of the house,"—resumed Abednego, after a short pause,—"it matters not now to relate! How she loved *me*, my utmost protestations would scarcely entitle you to believe! We were of one mind—one heart! So short was our acquaintance ere it ripened into love, and soon into intensest passion, that it were fruitless to detail its progress. We were constantly together. At the opera,—in morning promenades,—in marine excursions, the wealth and influence of my father in the city enabled me to enhance and secure their enjoyments; while the presence of the woman of my heart sufficed solely to my own.

"What a dream it was!—what joy—what madness! Restrained, however, by the presence of her sisters, and, even at her tender age, conscious that I should be an unacceptable suitor to her haughty father, she was the first to propose clandestine meetings. The gardens of our two mansions nearly adjoined; and, favoured by the climate, we met, as southern lovers do, by stealth, and in the quiet moonlight;—met often, and parted undiscovered. She was already my plighted wife. It needed only her father's sanction to make her mine for ever.

"By her own desire, however, my formal demand for her hand was still delayed.

"'Your great riches,' said she, 'may something avail to smoothe down the difficulties likely to arise on the part of my family. Still, I foresee that your Jewish name and origin will form an obstacle all but insuperable. Render that name renowned, dearest Osalez, and half the diffi-

culty will be overcome. Distinguish yourself in Parliament. Even as contact with the divinity converted a gibbet into the emblem of salvation, the instincts of genius consecrate with distinction the most ignominious origin. Come to my father to claim my hand as one who has commanded the applause of senates, and he will not presume to treat you with the disdain I apprehend.

"Stung by even the hint of scornful entreatment, my wounded pride stimulated me to fresh exertions—nay, gave me courage to bid her farewell, with a view to a speedier and more auspicious meeting. The family was to be in England early in the summer. By that time, I doubted not that opportunity would prosper all I meditated. The parliamentary agent employed by my father's London solicitors had made arrangements for my coming forward for a Government borough, on the creation of a batch of peers, whose patents were already in progress.

" To London, therefore, I hastened—sustained, even in the anguish of parting from an object engrossing every feeling of my heart and soul, by the ardent desire to render myself worthy, or rather *prove* myself worthy of pretending to her hand.

" Not a moment did I mistrust my own powers. The University had fixed its *imprimatur* on my scholarship, and already the eyes of many were upon me. All I needed, to acquire a position in society, was the passport which parliamentary distinction, more especially at the period of a national crisis, such as was then imminent, rarely fails to confer.

" But, alas!—the borough offered to me for purchase, by the inertness or incapacity of my agent, slipped through our hands;—and bitter was my disappointment on finding that a week's delay at Cadiz, conceded to the prayers of that beloved being at the moment of bidding her farewell, had been fatal to our prospects. So far from realizing

the promises I had made her, she would find me, on her return to England, the same obscure individual who had quitted her; and perhaps hear me rejected by her proud father as 'the grandson of Osalez the Jew.'

"Distracted by this apprehension, and still more by the idea that, should I want courage to make the attempt, some more appropriate match might present itself, which the jealousy of her sisters (with whom she was no favourite, because a favourite with all the world beside) would induce his lordship to press upon her acceptance, I resolved to leave no effort unattempted, however rash, to accomplish my purpose. At that moment, the sudden death of one of the members for a cathedral town prospered my views. Aware that my father would consider no expenditure excessive which served our ends, I determined to dare the contest. With money—eloquence—an unblemished character,—the chances seemed most auspiciously in my favour. So, at

least, I was assured by the solicitors, whose sole object in my election was the augmentation of their bill. They advised me to hurry down to L——, on the assurance of having smoothed my way to the hustings.

"Never shall I forget the elation of my spirits during that journey. I rejoiced at having declined the attendance of the men of business who had proposed bearing me company. For Hope was my companion by the way—promising all that can make glad the heart of youth,—a happy home,—a blessed, beauteous, loving wife,—and, when tempted forth from my glad fireside, the esteem and honour of my fellow-men.

"Such were my feelings and aspirations, Basil, when, on a bright and sunshiny afternoon, I entered L——. As I approached the city, the aspect of its population seemed to possess a peculiar interest in my eyes, as the people for whom I was about to exercise the first flow of my expanding intellect and human charities. They were about to be

entrusted to my care, as a fold to a shepherd;—the constituency over whose welfare I was to be the providence. Do you yet know enough of the world, young Sir, to appreciate the absurdity,—the vulgarity,—of such generous emotions?"

The eager narrator had now worked himself anew into his former excitement; and the low and mournful voice in which, as with a plaintive organ-stop, he had been describing his felicitous dream of early love, gradually gave place to harsh and abrupt impetuosity.

"Well, Sir! I entered the city," he resumed. "You have probably witnessed the triumphal entries of candidates on such flattering occasions? Laurels,—ribbons,—largesses to the populace,—feasting,—junketing,—music,—clamour,—all that money can concede or extort from the venal energies of popular nature. Those men of mud whom we fondly call the people, gave me back, with interest, the huzzas I had pur-

chased. But on entering the market-place, Basil, and confronting the opposition party, the first object that met my eyes was my own effigy roasting in the midst of a burning fiery furnace, surrounded with placards of 'What true Christian will vote for Abednego the Jew?'—'No circumcision.'—'Now Barabbas was a robber'—with pork griskins stuck on poles,—and every other insulting emblem, supposed to be abhorrent to my imputed faith.

"I was irritated, but nothing further. Conscious of the inapplicability of these whips and scorns of vulgar derision, (the usual implement of the hustings,) I conceived that nothing would be easier than to undeceive the population of L——. In almost every great assemblage, reason preponderates: and having, in my speech, on the first day's poll, uttered the most solemn denial of my imputed Judaism, and appealed to the support of the ecclesiastical interest of the city, to which I conscientiously

pledged my own, I fancied the mischief overcome.

" My eloquence made a manifest sensation. I was cheered by the people, and encouraged by the gentry. But during the night my adversaries got up a further storm of insult. Placards representing Shylock, with the knife and scales in his hand, preparing to cut off the pound of flesh, greeted me on emerging from my inn, intermingled with representations of the martyrdom of little St. Hugh, (whose tomb, unfortunately, graced the adjoining cathedral,) the legend of whose barbarous murder by 'the Jew's daughter,' was roared round the hustings by a score of stentorian voices. Every time I opened my lips to address the multitude, I was interrupted with

As it fell out one holiday,
  Small rain did fall,—
And all the boys in merry Lincoln
  Were met to play at ball;
Little Hugh he struck it the first—
  He struck it into the Jew's hall,
The Jew's daughter came out,
  And unto him did call—

till the name of St. Hugh of Lincoln became indeed accursed in my ears!

"The bigotry of Cadiz was pale and tame, in short, compared with that of the cathedral town! Suffice it, that after throwing away thousands of pounds, I lost my election—and far more than my election—my trust in the justice of mankind,—nay, the justice of Providence itself!

"I ask you again, Basil Annesley, was it rational that I should be thus reviled and rejected—untried—unheard—and a booby Squire preferred in my place, simply because some wag had written on the walls previous to my nomination—'What is your name?' 'ABEDNEGO!'—'Who gave you that name?' 'The high priest of the synagogue, in my baptism!'

"A thousand crushing thoughts came crowding into my soul when I re-entered London the following day. I was defeated; and the bitterness of a defeated candidate is proverbial. But never did defeat convey,

like mine, extinction of every prospect of distinction,—every hope of earthly happiness. Parliament was the Promethean torch that was to endow me with vitality;—and the living spark was quenched!

"It was then, Basil,—then that, for the first time, I learnt to appreciate the value of MONEY! In place of the Providence I was beginning to mistrust, the Molten Calf became my GOD! I said not to myself, like Lucifer, 'Evil, be thou my good!'—but 'Gold, be thou my guardian angel!' For the solicitors, by whose inaptitude I had been so ill supported, now whispered in my ear, that perhaps they might still be able to *purchase* a seat; and *this* time, they so far redeemed their word, that, within a fortnight from the silvery whisper reaching my ear, a spendthrift lordling had accepted the Chiltern Hundreds,—the credit side of my banker's book was lessened by an item of five thousand pounds,—and Abednego Osalez took his seat in the House of Commons!

"And now, Basil,—*now*, my way seemed clear before me! I was a member of the most enlightened legislative assembly in the world, and my reputation was in the keeping of the free press of the land of liberty. Forests of laurels seemed shooting up before me. I anticipated fame,—I anticipated popularity,—I anticipated, I—Great God!" exclaimed the excited man, interrupting himself,—"the flame of joy and triumph that swelled my veins at that moment seems rushing back anew into my heart, warm with all the glowing energies of youth. All the wealth of my bursting coffers were insufficient to requite the enjoyment of one sunny day of the unsullied brightness of that boyish confidence!"

"But surely, *in parliament*, the unjust and groundless prejudice you have described did not pursue you?"—demanded Annesley, deeply interested, yet almost alarmed by the vehemence of his companion.

"Even in parliament, Sir," resumed

Abednego, in a more subdued tone,—"even in the parliament of *liberal* England,—*enlightened* England,—I was still 'Osalez, the JEW!' They went further, these upright legislators, than the bigots of Cadiz. With them I was not the *son* of the Jew,—but *the* Jew. Though admitting me to be, by extraction, a Spaniard—by birth, an Englishman—by faith, a Protestant, I was still 'Osalez the Jew!' My name and face avouched it; and are not a name and face authentic evidence in any other spot of earth than a court of justice?

When I spoke well in the House,—it was 'well enough for a JEW;' when ill—'what could be *expected* of a JEW?' The measures I advocated were stigmatized by the press, as brought forward under the protection of the Jews;—and the whole repertory of waggish and vulgar jocularity was unloosed against me every time I opened my lips!

"I was almost maddened! Had I en-

tered my public career at a maturer period of life, I should have known how to repress such sneers, or how to retort upon my scorners. But I was a boy. The generous impulses of youth were warm within me. Writhing under a sense of injustice, I lost my temper. I sometimes spoke vilely,—and then, indeed, was the cry redoubled, that 'The second Daniel had broken down. But, then, what could be expected of a man with such a name as Abednego!'

"A sarcastic member of the Opposition, whose wit was armed as the stings of asps, attacked me one night in reply, upon an effective speech on the Corn-laws, by which I had commanded the attention of the House, with the sneer that—'He was aware that the honourable member's namesake and predecessor was memorable in scripture history through the persecutions of a king who fed on *grass;* but it did not follow that the Abednego of modern times was to become famous by his association with CORN.'

The House was convulsed with laughter at this sorry jest; and the laugh of parliament burns as with the caustic impress of the branding iron. The morning papers enlarged upon the pleasantry,—which was echoed by all the underlings of the press;—and before I had been three months in the House of Commons, instead of commanding the attention due to my abilities and good faith, I had become a laughing-stock, as Corn-law Abednego!'

"Still, there was comfort in perspective. The woman I loved was too true, too good, too fond, to be influenced by the voice of vulgar derision. SHE knew that I was neither a Jew, nor the son of a Jew. SHE knew that my education had been liberal,—my habits of life luxurious; and the low-bred citations regarding Monmouth Street and Duke's Place over *her*, at least, could have little influence. Even if her father should refuse me her hand, *she*, my tender,

faithful, trusting love, could not recal the gift of her heart.

" The family returned to England, Basil; the family which for months and months had accepted the hospitality of my father. Their door was shut in my face!

" In the interim, my engagement with her for whom I would have sacrificed my life, had been discovered, and all further intercourse between us was interdicted!

" The brother was still so infirm as to afford a fair plea for retiring instantly into the country; and in the aristocratic seclusion of his own park, the old lord fancied himself able to hold at bay the presumptuous importunities of the grandson of the Jew of Cadiz!"

" And you pursued them, of course!"— cried Basil Annesley, a new species of interest mingling with his curiosity. " You accepted dismissal from no other lips than those of her you loved?"

"I pursued them"!—resumed his companion, half closing his eyes, as if to reconcentrate himself into the allusions of retrospection. "I pursued them. I saw her again. We met as before, Basil—by stealth. The summer nights favoured our frequent interviews. Again, she pledged her faith to me; again she swore, through good or evil report, to be faithful. But we were discovered, and,—spare me the recital! Through the instrumentality of her sisters, there was a cruel scene of detection. A struggle ensued, a fatal struggle,—the infirm brother was disabled. As I live and breathe, Basil, it was not I who inflicted the fatal injury—But he died! The inquest absolved me. Surgical examination proved that the accidental bursting of a blood-vessel had proved fatal.

"To renew my intercourse with the family, after this dreadful event and the terrible publicity given to our cause of quarrel, was impossible. The very attempt had been an

insult. My beloved wrote to me entreating forbearance. Overtures on my part, she said, would perhaps hurry her broken-hearted father into the grave. But still she swore again and again, with the fervid earnestness that woman only knows how to assume, that, whatever time or distance might divide us, for this world and the next she was my own, —'in the sight of GOD, my wife!' In the sight of GOD!—Alas! even *she*, perhaps, felt that the mightiest of names might be appealed to in vain by so utter an outcast as Osalez the JEW!"

"Compose yourself, Sir!"—murmured Basil, in a kindly voice, on perceiving that big tears were rolling down the withered cheeks of his companion. "Disturb yourself no further to talk of this!"

"Now, or never!"—cried the old man, with a strong effort over his feelings. "I complied, Basil, with her injunctions. The Session was over. I returned to Cadiz with the intention of at least six months' absence

from England and *her!* But, what a spot had I chosen to nourish my regrets! The groves,—the gardens,—in which we had wandered, hand in hand,—the same white walls, steeped in the same moonlight, were ever around me;—and she whose very soul had been conjoined there with mine in ecstatic delirium,—*she* was afar,—weeping,—lonely,—disconsolate,—waiting for me,—sorrowing for me! In that thought, however, there was comfort. My tears flowed the more, but the more soothingly, when I remembered that all my sorrows were shared by that dearest of all human beings!

"Within three months, Basil, from the day of my arrival at Cadiz, the newspaper was placed in my hand which announced her marriage with another!"

"What treachery!" burst involuntarily from the lips of the young man, though a terrible suspicion had already presented itself to his mind, connecting the narrative now unfolded with the revelations of the old gardener.

"Treachery most monstrous and most ungrateful!"—rejoined, with kindling eyes, the excited Abednego. "And lo! on that day I swore an oath before GOD,—an oath to be mightily avenged,—avenged on both, —on all,—the husband,—the wife—the proud, obdurate family! And I was so! My cry to the Almighty for vengeance was at least prospered!"

"Before you proceed further, Sir, consider a moment!" interposed Basil, perplexed and distressed. "Let not the excitement of the moment betray you into avowals which you may hereafter bitterly repent!"

"I *have* considered, and would fain you should know all!"—replied the old man in a milder tone.

"And first, to judge me fairly,—to judge me leniently,—reflect upon the misery of my position! Reflect that I had ventured my 'all of earthly happiness in that frail barque, and that the wreck was total!'. My hopes were withered. Nothing was left me in this

world,—nothing but MONEY! In the first struggles of my anguish, I resigned my seat in Parliament, and abjured the country by which I had been so despitefully entreated and persecuted. I abandoned England. But I brought neither peace nor honour to my home. My father, whose highest ambitions were baffled by my despair, became himself surly and desponding; and domestic comfort was gradually banished from our household!

"It was probably the gloom thus engendered that caused my young sister to look abroad for happiness. Soon after my return, her mother died; and thus left alone with her fractious father and surly brother, the poor girl bestowed her affections on the only individual admitted within our doors; —Verelst,—whom her father had engaged for her tuition in painting,—though, as a man of genius travelling for the perfectionment of his art, superior to the ordinary condition of an ordinary professor.

"When apprised of her attachment, my

animosity to the young German, who could afford no home to the cherished flower of our fireside, and whom I unjustly accused of interested views in his attachment, sufficed to prove that I had suffered persecution and learnt no mercy! I advised my father to drive the needy adventurer from our gates; and the consequence was the flight and disastrous marriage of my sister, which precipitated my poor mortified father into the grave.

"I was now the master of millions! The efforts long made by my father for the realization of his property, with a view to quitting Spain, had, by this time, brought to bear the centralization of our capital. It was, however, indispensable for the completion of this object, retarded by the old man's death, that I should visit the East; in various parts of which, my predecessors had maintained mercantile establishments.

The expedition pleased me. I wished to behold mankind in an unconventionalized

condition. I wanted to look upon the land which had given birth to my ill-fated race. Already my views of social morality were sufficiently disorganized;—in the East, I thoroughly threw off the prejudices of civilization. To behold other creeds established as firmly, and producing results as beneficial, and more consonant with, the demands of climate and country than Christianity, convinced me that the all-seeing God,—to whom altars, like thrones, are but the foot-stools of his power,—who, for his own wise purposes, has apportioned the faith of the Mussulman to one tropic, of the Brahmin to another,—who revealed, by the lips of his prophets, centuries and centuries before the birth of Christ, the great sacrifice of Redemption, and the cruelty of the Hebrews by which alone it was accomplishable,—must behold with sentiments of mercy, wide from the vengeance imputed to Him by the implacable mind of man, the hereditary

responsibility of the children of Israel for the predestined crime of their forefathers!

"Thenceforward the Jews, with whom I was classed, became, in my eyes, as any other people; save in being more unjustly aspersed, and consequently more deserving commiseration.

"Amid the succeeding changes of religion and legislation I was compelled to witness,—variations which render morality a matter of latitude and longitude, and the virtues of one hemisphere the vices of the other,—I began to look around me for a substantial and tangible standard of merit.

"'WHAT,' I exclaimed,—'what constitutes right and wrong? *where* is the Positive, *where* the true?' The answer was 'GOLD!' Basil Annesley!

"Who will deny that, over all nations and languages,—under the tyranny of one or the tyranny of many,—the majesty of the crown or the majesty of the tiara,—

MAMMON holds the preponderating influence?—GOLD, GOLD, GOLD, constitutes the Τα Κατον—the sole divinity,—the Jehovah of the universal earth!

"Once convinced of this, I bowed down my knee and worshipped! Long and eagerly in search of some First Cause in which to put my trust, I cried aloud with joy when I had found it! My wandering ark had stuck upon the top of an Ararat; and I sought no better land as a resting-place for the sole of my foot!

CHAPTER III.

Oh! gorgeous, glorious East!—Of man and God
The better birth-place!—In creation's scale
Heaven aptly placed the first!

VANE.

"My projects of earthly happiness had been so various and so rudely discomfited, that, having at length adopted a system of positive enjoyment,—a glowing materialism the means of which were existent in the vivid impulses of health seething within me, and the enormous wealth bursting from my coffers,—I seemed to begin life anew:—casting behind me all painful retrospections, as well as every unsatisfactory anticipation for the future.

" Or rather, I had no *need* of anticipations! I lived *in* the moment,—*for* the moment. The glorious climate I was inhaling,—the pleasures I was crushing within my arms,—sufficed me!

" Believe not those who, visiting India for the vulgar purpose of amassing the fortune I carried with me, decry the climate as oppressive,—the fruits as tasteless. He who goes thither furnished with the power and means of a satrap,—who progresses from kingdom to kingdom burdened by those appliances which smoothe all difficulties of travel,—*he* will attest, (if, indeed, saving myself, such a man ever explored the rugged marvels of the Ghauts, or luxuriated in the more than Grecian pastorality of Cashmere, that the pleasures of Europe are tame and colourless beside those which vitalize the seemingly languid regions of the East.

" Those courts which we—the real barbarians—tax as barbaresque, are more re-

fined in their indolent resources than our pompous Western show of sovereignty, with its pedantry of etiquette, and circumstantiality of ostentation. To MY thinking, gorgeousness becomes only a royal pageant, which forms no pretensions to that moral enlightenment which *ought* to withdraw its trust from the pomps and vanities of show.

"In the East, moreover, regal splendour is less superficial. The gem is pure from the matrix,—the precious ore from the mine. No false jewels,—no gilding,—no tinsel,—no substitute of art for the costly treasures teeming on the spot from the prodigality of nature! All is glowing as the sunshine—all vast as the mighty stretch of landscape around. Even the smiles of woman, if venal, pretend not to the disinterestedness which forms the vilest of masks to European venality. In the East, I loved the *reality* I found in everything around me,—the reality, the abundance, the space, inspiring infinite contempt for those littlenesses

of civilization, which rarely affect grandeur, without exhibiting the mock heroism and inflated proportions of comic masks in a winter pantomime. For five years or more I abided in the East—in splendour and enjoyment a very satrap!

"Amid my luxurious pleasures, my interests were not neglected: and bringing to the spot an enormous capital, as well as considerable practical insight into the commercial capabilities of Europe, I, in the course of my residence in India, was enabled to double the splendid fortune bequeathed me by my father.

"Had I not reason, therefore, Basil, to put my trust in my new idol? GOLD had doubled my gold, as well as doubled my pleasures. Nevertheless, with the restlessness natural to one whose divinity promises no immortality, no spiritual hereafter ennobling our re-absorption into dust and ashes, at the close of a few years, when my pulse beat less wantonly, and my senses be-

came palled by the enjoyments of an enervating climate, I began to ask myself, whether intellectual beatitude might not be substituted with advantage for this paradise of the senses? I was now so thoroughly severed from the European mass, that I had nothing to fear from their molestations; and might consequently profit, unheeded, by the prodigious steps which civilization had been making during my absence.

"Great revolutions had been accomplished in Europe. Thrones were flung down,—dynasties extinguished. The consequences of the French Revolution had made themselves felt even in the country so belaboured into subordination by the rattan of sceptre and crosier;—and England still trembled to her centre!

"It was not in England, however, that I was minded to abide. I hated her hypocritical institutions; I despised her pretended zeal for Christianizing the forms of the world; yet ever gainsaying, by her practices, the

spirit of Christianity: — persecuting, on pretence of resenting persecution, the wretched remnant of the children of Israel; yet faithless to the holy doctrines of the Cross whenever they traverse her vices or reprove her hardness of heart!

" France, if more a sinner, was at least candid and explicit in her sins; and indifferent, as a naturalized subject of Spain, to the war at that moment proceeding between the Directory and Great Britain, I hurried to Paris, to reap the fruitful harvest of pleasure, of my golden sowing.

" At that epoch, society, disorganized by the still recent Revolution, was vibrating with those irregular oscillations which precede the restoration of order. It was the very moment for a man, intent, like myself, upon the lawless pursuit of pleasure, to purchase, at an easy cost, a variety of cumbrous spoils which the recent political convulsions had left masterless.

" A princely hotel in the capital,—a

noble country residence, once royal, situated on the wooded shores of the Seine,—enabled me to establish myself with a degree of magnificence more than rivalling that of the *Fermiers Généraux* flourishing under the auspices of monarchical corruption. All that was left of aristocracy in Paris crowded to my fêtes, to luxuriate in a renewal of sensual pleasures long withheld from their enjoyment. Half of the *Almanach des Gourmands*, Basil, was composed upon the strength of experiments made in my kitchen; and the last effective notes of Garet were uttered in my *Salle de Concert!*

"No need to corrupt your unsullied imagination, boy, by the description of my effeminate pleasures! They were such as Sardanapalus might have envied;—they were such as the ghost of the Marechal de Richelieu should have risen to share;—they were such, that (experience having instructed me in the finite and transient nature of physical enjoyment, and the *ennui* that

follows it like a spectral shadow), I have since discerned a charm in privation and abstinence, as a contrast to the wearisome repletion of former days.

" Still, while it lasted, that bewilderment of tumultuous pleasures was indeed intoxicating! The first artists, wits, and men of letters of the day, crowded into my gilded saloons; even as, before and since, they beset the antechambers of royalty. Among others, Talleyrand, the cynical ex-bishop, and high-bred future prince, was my frequent companion; and in our luxurious seclusion, what epigrams did we not vent upon the servilities of the human race!—what blasphemies against all creeds and faiths, save that of—the Golden Calf!

" Amid this chaos of political and moral disorganization, arose the Consulate and Napoleon! I took little heed of politics. An avowed Epicurean, I cared only for peace or war as an obstacle or facilitation to my pleasures; and though war becomes a

bitter penalty in barren England,—compelled to seek from the Continent all her accessories of sensual enjoyment,—self-sufficing, fertile, joyous France, looks upon the closing of her ports without anxiety. I rejoiced among the rest, however, when Consular negotiation brought about a cessation of hostilities between the rival countries; for it filled me with glorious hopes to witness the arrival of those shoals of English travellers who never fail to rush to Paris, when occasion serves, for flinging aside their pall of national gloom.

"What triumph to deny them access to my house!—What delight to tantalize them with exclusion from the brilliant hospitalities of the wealthy Spaniard:—for I was now redeemed from one species of obloquy; in Paris, religion had ceased to obtain mention from lips polite; Osalez the Jew would have been neither more nor less to them than Osalez the Gheber; and, whether I worshipped the God of Christians, or the

god Fo, was a matter of indifference to those who quaffed my Sillery and tasted my Salmis. Even the name of Osalez had, however, become so distasteful to me, from its connexion with my misfortunes, that, from the moment of settling in Paris, I assumed that of Clerval, derived from the estate I had purchased on my naturalization.

"Even as I had predicted, scarcely were the fêtes given for the celebration of the Peace of Amiens (of which those of the Hôtel de Clerval were by far the most gorgeous) at an end, when I was beset with applications from English aristocrats aspiring to the honour of my acquaintance, and access to my gallery and table. Having visited Paris to amuse themselves, they seemed to care little at whose cost they were amused.

"With the exception of a few inquiring tourists, and still fewer families residing abroad for purposes of economical education, English residents on the Continent are

rarely persons of real merit or distinction. Spendthrift lords, flying before the face of their creditors,—or *roué* lords, recreating themselves with lawless indulgences which England has denounced as infamous,—constitute the chief frequenters of foreign society. For the transitory indulgence of their pleasures in a strange country, such men as those care not with whom they associate, or to what means they have recourse to obtain present occasion of diversion.

"While the disappointed creditor at home growls with infructuous rage over the loss of his victim, the triumphant libertine is inhaling the corrupted vapours of the masked ball or midnight orgie—fancying the growing oppression of his senses a symptom of enjoyment—or listening, in the crowded theatre, to a language he does not understand—or exposing his ungraceful figure and uncouth costume to the satire of a nation too happy to repay, by their triumphant irony, the defeats of former years.

" Among these, I had no fear of recognition. The burning sun of the East, and the habits of a luxurious satrap, had so thoroughly effaced from my features all trace of the boy-member whom their levity had formerly coughed down, as to place an irreconcileable incongruity between the presumptuous Jew of Cadiz and Clerval the millionary. I was accounted in Paris the finest of fine gentlemen. Having formed an intimacy in the East with the beautiful Mrs. Grant, now the graceful and popular wife of Talleyrand, Monsieur de Clerval was considered to occupy, in the fashionable circles of Neuilly, Raincy, and Rambouillet, the posts engrossed by the libertine Duc de Lauzun prior to the Revolution.

" On the other hand, my enormous wealth constituted a rock, against which innumerable shallow vessels, launched upon the deceptious sea of Pleasure by fool-hardy London, were successively split to pieces. Wherever they attempted competition with

the opulent Clerval, whether as regarded financial speculation, or the briefer madness of the gaming-table, ruin ensued. I retained my prodigious funds in a floating and tangible form; nor was it by means of mortgages or annuities I had to meet the pretensions of the enervate lordlings who presumed to confront me in my path, instead of treading at an humble distance in my footsteps. What chance, therefore, I entreat you, had the empty fops of White's, whose capital was contained in the embroidered note-book in their waistcoat-pockets, against one who, in the days when Rothschilds were not, was able to influence, by his financial operations, half the money-markets in Europe?

"Among the first who fell a prey to my strength of courage and purse at the gaming-table, was the husband of the elder of those insolent sisters of the object of my affection, by whose malice my early hopes had been so cruelly blighted. Lord Willesden, (suffer

me to conceal, under that designation, the title of my victim,) was one of those self-sufficient profligates who, on the pavement of St. James's-street, acquire the authority of a potentate. Arriving in Paris with Charles Fox, flushed by his previous triumphs at White's, and insolent with the favour of Carlton House, the London puppy affected, in the first instance, the same air of defiance, when dining at Legacq's, or the Pavillon de Hanovre, to which his recognised position in his own country lent, at least, some colour. For a time, he affected to brave the man he could not aspire to surpass;—nor was it till he had lost five thousand livres to me on parole, that he was forced to recognise my superiority.

"Heartbroken by his system of profligacy, Lady Willesden was now a confirmed invalid, and rarely quitted her hotel. We had, consequently, never met; whereas her lord (launched in the full career of dissipation, affording hope to the Parisians that a

new Phœnix was arising from the ashes of their former dissoluteness,) was my constant associate.

" Six weeks after his arrival in Paris, Lord Willesden was a ruined man,—ruined beyond hope,—beyond redemption! — His estates, his houses, his plate, his jewels, were pledged to those to whom I furnished the funds, destined to flow back, a refluent Pactolus, into my golden coffers.—Hazard and roulette had made the haughty aristocrat my slave.—My foot was upon his neck, and upon the neck of his children's children!—At that period, Basil, I was stern of heart as some devastating monster of antiquity.—Cruelty was my luxury,—revenge my pride!—But *that* cruelty had been engendered by evil entreatment; and it was perforce of the endurance of scourging and torture, that my nature waxed so hard!

" I now possessed a thousand advantages over the people by whom I had been persecuted into wickedness, and not one of them

was neglected. Every night, when I retired to my luxurious couch, and ground my teeth in ecstasy over the recollection of the day's pleasures, it was, indeed, an enhancement to them to reflect, that not a mischief I was working but conveyed anguish to the bosom of the countrymen by whom I had been so unjustly reviled.

"Those who had 'spat upon my Jewish gabardine' were making heavy atonement for the fault. I now trampled upon them in my turn. Talk of a bed of roses, Basil Annesley! commend *me* to the couch whose pillows are inflated by the swelling sighs of a prostrate enemy;—to the slumbers soothed by the murmurs of——"

He paused!—An involuntary shudder betraying the disgust of his companion had startled him into silence. But it was too late. The innate prejudice, long dormant in the soul of Basil, involuntarily retraced these workings of malice to the Jewish origin of Osalez. For the first time, the

young man beheld in his companion a legitimate descendant of the tribe who drove nails into the hands and feet, and pierced the side, of the meek Jesus of Nazareth!

So forcibly was this feeling of estrangement depicted in the countenance of the young man, that, in resuming his narrative Abednego hazarded no further reference to the animosities by which his vengeance had been actuated.

"Suffice it," he resumed, in a milder tone of voice, "that, while realizing in the more refined West the warm imaginings of a luxurious Oriental, I did not lose sight of those still profounder passions, and keener anticipations, engendered by the cold-blooded persecutions of English pride.

"Lord Willesden had become my puppet. The fastidious London coxcomb moved only at my beck and bidding. But though he was my daily guest,—sometimes at my brilliant hôtel, sometimes at my princely country seat,—I scrupulously abstained from

entering his doors. My pretext for declining his invitation was the infirm health of Lady Willesden, and a disinclination to intrude upon the sober domesticities of an invalid fireside; by which means, I contrived to excite an interest in my favour in the mind of the afflicted wife. My indulgence as a creditor, and liberality as an associate, as yet prevented all rumours of her husband's new follies and prodigalities from reaching her ears; and hearing of Monsieur de Clerval only as a hospitable host, a paragon of refinement courted in the best society, she felt grateful for the deference which kept him aloof from her impoverished seclusion.

"Though vain and dissolute, Willesden was fond of his wife—that is, fond of her after the selfish fashion of the mere egotist. It would have been a relief to him, had he left her behind him in England, to have suddenly received tidings of her decease. But he could not bear to *see* her suffer. Conscious

of the injuries he was inflicting upon her and her children, he shrunk from the spectacle of her altered countenance. The more ill and enfeebled she became, the deeper he plunged into excesses that banished all recollection of his embittered home.

"One morning, he entered my breakfast-room earlier than usual, and throwing himself into a *causeuse*, began to execrate, in his ordinary strain, his ill-luck of the night before.

"'It is all Maria's fault,' cried he. 'The foolish woman fancies it disturbs her to hear the *porte cochère* open in the dead of night; and protests she lies awake awaiting the signal of my return home. By these means, she has exacted a promise from me not to remain out after three; and the consequence is that, last night, just as the luck began to turn in my favour, I was forced to quit the table.'

"'You were quite right,' said I, adhering to my system of deference towards his wife's

exactions. 'No occasion to become a brute because you are a *roué!* What are a few thousand livres, more or less, compared with an additional pang, inflicted on a suffering woman, already more than sufficiently injured?'—

"Willesden never liked his wife less than when I affected to defend her cause.

"'Confound the whole sex and their united injuries!' was his brutal rejoinder. 'It becomes *you*, forsooth, Clerval, to advocate the cause of these charming martyrs. Unshackled by the iron fetters of lawful wedlock, *you* behold in them a bevy of angels. My dear fellow, the mere saunterer in a garden beholds the roses in their bloom, worships their beauty and sweetness; but the proprietor, who is fated to see the leaves fall one by one, leaving only a thorny, useless haw behind, is apt to find his enthusiasm evaporate. *N'importe!*—my matrimonial prospects are brightening! Next week, I shall be at liberty to observe the

sun rise where and how I please. My wife's sister is coming over from England to nurse her. Maria has been dispatching, I suspect, such doleful accounts of my neglects, that her family consider it necessary she should be better cared for!'—

"Judge, Basil, how the blood, which for a moment had receded to my heart, leaving my guilty cheeks colourless, rushed anew to my face when Lord Willesden, in answer to my almost breathless inquiries, acquainted me with the *name* of his expected visitant!

"Yes! It was herself,—it was the object of my first and only attachment!—The husband, I thanked Heaven, was not to bear her company, his military duties rendering it impossible for him to leave England.—She was to come alone, as the affectionate attendant of her dying sister.

"Never shall I forget the tumultuous nature of my feelings during the remainder of the day on which this intelligence was communicated. The ground appeared un-

steady under my feet; the atmosphere too light to satisfy my respiration. I scarcely knew how to meet the singular occasion that presented itself for the gratification of the hungry vengeance I had been cherishing like some beast of prey in the darksome depths of my soul.

"A few more days, and she arrived. With assumed carelessness did I proceed to question Lord Willesden concerning his sister-in-law; and with apparent indifference I heard that she had been wedded against her will, and was a repining wife and unexulting mother.

"'Thank Heaven!' was Willesden's concluding phrase, 'she will be content to devote herself to the sick-room. Though still in the prime of life, poor soul, the world has ceased to attract her. So long as she can be induced to remain here, therefore, I am at liberty to divert myself to my heart's content.'

"From that moment, my influence over

Willesden was exercised with wholly different views. Affecting deep compassion for the position in which he had placed his children, I was constantly preaching reformation. Aware of the feebleness of his nature, I was certain that every time his fair sister-in-law pleaded the cause of his injured family, or implored him to renounce his fatal propensity for play, he would exclaim, 'You are almost as great a bore as Clerval! Just such are the arguments which my friend is perpetually using! Clerval protests that a husband and father has no pretext for indulging in vulgar libertinism.'

"I was observant, nevertheless, while figuring in the novel character of a Mentor, not to neglect the care of my reputation as a man of gallantry. The sick-room of Lady Willesden was frequented by the Duchess of Gordon, and half-a-dozen other Englishwomen of rank, who glittered in the gay world of Paris during the brief cessa-

tion of hostilities between the two countries; and I spared no pains to render my name a constant topic of discussion in their fastidious circle.

"Never had fêtes excited so supreme a sensation as those which I devised to dazzle the eyes of my unsuspecting countrywomen,—never was exclusiveness so insolent as that which I affected concerning their admittance within my gates. Sometimes, those gates unclosed for the diversion of hundreds of guests, who were fêted with the prodigality and fancifulness of some Arabian tale. Sometimes the number of the favoured was limited to a single fortunate group, and not a syllable allowed to transpire of the nature of the entertainment, of which the amount of the cost was alone cited by the envious;—till, like Louis XIV., I was honoured by the frivolous beauties of the day with the name of 'The Enchanter.'

"My object was speedily accomplished. I learnt from Willesden that my peculiari-

ties excited considerable curiosity in his family circle.

"'Lady Willesden seems revived as by a miracle, by her sister's arrival!' said he one day, as we were dashing back to Paris from the Château de Clerval, at the utmost speed of a set of fine English horses, to be in time for the opera; 'and the first symptom of her reviving health is her inquisitiveness about yourself. These women want to make your acquaintance, Clerval. When will you come and dine with me?'

"With sudden reserve, I pleaded old-standing engagements for a fortnight to come; and Willesden, being perfectly aware that many of these were of my own creation, the sensitiveness of an embarrassed man attributed my reluctance to join his little circle to the distress of his fireside, and the defects of an unaccomplished cook.

"'I am aware,' he retorted, 'that I have nothing to attract an Amphytrion like yourself. Nor should I have presumed to

invite Monsieur de Clerval, the gastronome, to fast at my humble board, but for the importunity of my sister-in-law, who is eager to make your acquaintance. Your munificence as a patron of the arts (of which she has taken it into her flighty head to become a votary, to console herself, I suppose, for the disappointments of defeated affections) has strangely excited her interest in your favour.'

"I bowed and smiled, but made no move towards conciliating the wish thus intimated. On the contrary, the plainer his hints, the more resolutely did I keep aloof. At length, alarmed lest he might estrange me from himself by further pertinacity, Lord Willesden ceased to importune me to visit his house; and my firmness served only to augment the restless curiosity of those against whose peace my manœuvres were concocted.

"Meanwhile, I had seen her again. From my box at the opera, and in the public

promenades, I had beheld the object still and ever dearest to my heart; and the sight of her did but still further stimulate my projects of vengeance. She had now attained the full maturity of womanly charms. The lovely girl of eighteen had become the beautiful and commanding woman of thirty. *How* beautiful, the admiration she attracted, whenever seen by glimpses in the society of Paris, sufficiently attested; *how* beautiful, the tumults of my own distracted heart, as I hurried on such occasions from her presence, afforded a far more painful proof. Unrestrained in all other pursuits and inclinations, the caution and self-control I was forced to observe in *this*, served only to augment the force of my passion. I was becoming madly and desperately in love,—far more desperately than when, with the purer fervour of boyhood, I wooed her to become my bride.

"I appreciated too highly, Basil, the gentle nature of that beloved being, to

suppose it possible the mere dazzlements of vanity would suffice for her captivation. I knew that she must respect the man, as well as admire the patron, before the brilliant Clerval created any serious impression on her feelings. To effect this, I contrived that, in all her little acts of charity, my name should reach her as beforehand with her in the duties of benevolence. She could not extend her hand to the orphan or the widow, but she encountered mine already outstretched in mercy.

"Many of these instances were mere claptraps, got up to attract her notice. By the aid of money, Basil, *anything* may be manufactured to order,—even 'Cases of extreme distress;'—and little did that humane woman suspect that the wants she fancied herself to be relieving were as much an effort of art as the scenery of the Grand Opera!"

"I scarcely conceive, Sir," suddenly interrupted Basil Annesley, "the advantage

likely to arise to either of us from these confidences. If an effusion of penitence, it is not for me to grant you absolution; if a matter of vaunt, (as I would fain retain some respect for my benefactor,) I entreat you to refrain from avowals which are gradually exciting my disgust."

"Hear me to an end," cried Abednego. "I address you neither in a tone of boastfulness nor of whining remorse; but as a man, having wrestled hand to hand with the sorest temptations and trials of life, willing to impart to one he dearly loves the fatally-earned fruits of his experience!

"All I can do to favour your squeamish tender-heartedness is to pass over briefly the snares with which I encompassed the path of my destined victim,—sometimes hoping, but oftener despairing of success. But if unable a second time to conquer her affections, I was resolved at least to humble her pride.

"Spring was in its prime, when I an-

nounced one of those gorgeous entertainments which, once in every month, used to set the fashionable world of Paris into commotion. It was to be a daylight fête at my château on the Seine; and a flotilla of Venetian barges, long in preparation, was launched for the purpose of conveying my guests to the landing stairs. It was speedily rumoured among the invited, that not a single English person was to be included among the guests of Monsieur de Clerval; and though Willesden, my constant companion, flattered himself that, as a matter of course, an exception would be made in *his* favour, I took an early opportunity to inform him that, having an especial object for my *Fête des Lilacs*, I was forced to exclude him among the rest of the English pretendants.

"Though evidently nettled by my communication, Willesden was too deeply my debtor to hazard a syllable of remonstrance. Attributing the word 'object' to some reigning lady of my thoughts, he ventured to ban-

ter me concerning the mysterious *liaison* demanding such vast concessions; and I replied in terms of romantic gallantry, which, I justly surmised, would be repeated by his fireside, and serve only to excite a new interest in my favour.

"Without intending it, Willesden was constantly betraying to me the fruition of my schemes. I found that I was a perpetual subject of discussion at his house. While informing me how often he was forced to become my champion with his wife and sister, his silly vanity exposed far more than he intended. He did not disguise from me how grievously his lovely guest was mortified to find herself excluded from the only house in Paris she had the slightest curiosity to enter.

"I looked grave; and when Lord Willesden again approached the subject, abstained wholly from his society—and even issued orders for his non-admission to my house;—nay, if we met, by chance, in the Bois de

Boulogne, I assumed so cold and louring a countenance, that the poor man was terrified by the wrath he had provoked.

"The amount of I O U's, and bonds, bearing his signature, in my strong box, rendered it unsafe for him to give offence to one so potential. Had I not reason for self-gratulation? Abednego the Jew had reduced the insolent English peer to the most abject subservience!

"By degrees, he was compelled to assume a still viler attitude. The embarrassment of his affairs rendered a further levy of money indispensable; and not a banker could be found to assist him. Thus circumstanced, in a foreign country, the straits to which he was reduced became alarming: but I had so often obliged him, and had of late assumed so forbidding a countenance, that to *me* he dared not apply.

"Little suspecting that the whole affair was of my contrivance, he met me in the world as though nothing had occurred;—

nor was it till the humiliation of finding his wife and guest on the eve of becoming homeless, drove him to the application, that he once more addressed me in the subdued tone of a suppliant.

"Before the request had half escaped his lips, it was granted: nay, the amount of the loan he desired was trebled, and forced upon him; till, in the exuberance of his gratitude, Lord Willesden would, I verily believe, have subscribed to *any* terms his creditor saw fit to propose.

"'Do not perplex yourself about such a mere trifle!' said I,—'I am only too happy to assist you. If you wish, my dear Willesden, to oblige me in your turn, all I have to ask is, that you will admit me, as a friend, into your family circle, in spite of any remonstrances that may be addressed to you by Lady Willesden and her sister.'

"'Remonstrances?' repeated the astonished Willesden. 'Why, I have been hinting to you for the last week the earnest

desire of the latter to make your acquaintance.'

"'The lady's good intentions may subside after she has seen me. Besides, I shall not be satisfied with the concessions of mere acquaintanceship. The object of my ambition is, to stand preëminent in her favour.'

"'In that case, my dear Clerval, I cannot flatter you with much prospect of success,' replied Willesden, somewhat embarrassed. 'Though unhappy in her marriage, she is incapable of losing sight of her duties as a wife and mother.'

"'Of course!—*All* your English ladies are so rigid in their principles—so correct in their conduct,—that one cannot but wonder how such libels as divorce bills are suffered to go unpunished.'

"'I am not vaunting the virtue of my sister-in-law,' replied Lord Willesden,—the blood mantling in his sallow cheek convincing me that nothing but his obligations towards me prevented him from knocking

me down. 'She has no heart to bestow. In early life, she formed a low connexion, the effects of which, my poor wife assures me, she has never been able to throw off.'

"It was now my turn to flush with anger; and the insolence of the noble insolvent confirmed me in my evil projects.

"'No one is able to calculate upon the caprices and fantasticalities of woman's nature,'—said I. 'All I ask of you is a solemn promise that, whatever ungraciousness may be testified towards me by Lady Willesden and her sister, you will not deny me access to your house.'

"'Deny you access?' cried his lordship. 'You,—my best friend,—my benefactor!—You, who throughout the winter I have been courting as a guest?—Absurd!'

"'Absurd perhaps. But having hitherto resisted your pressing invitations, I will not even now accept them, unless under a written guarantee that my welcome is secured.'

"After the numberless obligations he had

signed in my favour, this appeared a trifling concession; and laughing heartily at my squeamishness, Lord Willesden entered readily into what appeared to be a joke, by drawing up a paper ensuring me access to his house at all hours, and under all possible circumstances.

"I conclude that, with certain modifications, he announced my sudden caprice to his wife; for I had reason to know that my visit was now hourly expected and prepared for. I chose, however, to be expected in vain!

Nearly a month passed; and Willesden must have attributed the wayward conditions I had dictated to some momentary whim; for, so far from availing myself of the permission I had extorted, I abstained from associating even with himself. Curiosity and interest were, accordingly, excited to the strongest in his family circle, concerning the man whose movements were erratic as those of a meteor; and on my an-

nouncing a second summer entertainment at my château, *La fête des Roses*, with similar restrictions as to the English, with the single exception of Lord Willesden's family, I rightly conjectured that my invitation would be accepted with gratitude.

"Money constitutes the magic of our epoch. But Paris, above all other places, affords an auspicious field for the exercise of the fairy wand endowed by prodigality. Resolved that the last fête of the mysterious Clerval should excel all his previous efforts, I was ably seconded by the genius of that new *renaissance des arts*, fostered under the auspices of the Consulate.

But the enormous outlay (rumours of the amount of which afforded ample occupation to the wonderers of the great world) was produced less by the splendour of the entertainment than by my conceit of producing, on the banks of the Seine, an exact reduplication of those well-remembered gardens of Cadiz, the scene of the happiest

moments of my life. The illusion was complete. Tree for tree,—arbour for arbour,—the spot which had witnessed my midnight interviews with *her*, was reproduced for the occasion!

"It was *there*, Basil, I received her! It was *there* I advanced to welcome that repining wife, when, in all the exuberance of matronly beauty, and leaning on the arm of her brother-in-law, she beheld before her the injured lover of her youth."

CHAPTER IV.

A poor, weak woman!
Ay, take up the phrase, ye babbling thousands,
From century to century!—Woman's weakness
The pigmy man hath scope of intellect
To measure!—But by what expanded powers,
What newly kindled energies of soul,
Shall he attain the power to estimate
Her strength,—her truth,—the greatness of her virtue?
When strong, and true, and great, no living thing
Great, true, and strong as she!

AKENSIDE.

"IN the perversity of my heart, Basil Annesley, I anticipated with confidence the success of my projects. The humiliations of former days were effaced by a series of triumphs. Everything, of late, had prospered with me; and long accustomed to the

adoration of the vain and interested, I doubted not that the woman described to me as a 'repining wife,' would be content to atone for all I had undergone for her sake.

"But while triumphing in the strength of our own vices, we are apt to calculate too largely on the weakness of others. Whether as the arbitrary voluptuary of the East, or the corrupt Epicurean of Paris, my experience had not prepared me for the integrity of heart, — the self-respect, — the womanly purity,—the feminine pride,—arrayed against my pretensions, she not only resented the manœuvres by which she had been betrayed into my presence, but rejected, as an insult, my protestations of unaltered attachment!

"Had I approached her in a less presumptuous guise,—had I appeared before her poor,—humble,—friendless,—the promptings of her heart might have stood my friend; but she despised the proud and

ostentatious man who stood before her as a conqueror. Her clear understanding, her upright purposes, were not to be baffled by my shallow intrigues; and the net in which my subtlety had entangled her shallow brother-in-law was unable to enfold her in its meshes.

"I have not courage to recite the opprobrious terms in which she manifested her insight into my views and character!

"'My father and family judged wisely!' said she; 'and I now admit that I was blinded to your real character by my partial affections! The penalty invoked by the blaspheming Jews upon themselves and their children's children, has converted you,—even you, Osalez,—into an abject worshipper of Mammon! You have attempted to dazzle, by your gorgeous prodigality, the heart that might have been moved to seek you out in penury or affliction. My father was right. There exists no real sympathy between us!'

"Judge of my indignation,—judge of my despair, on hearing from her own lips this bitter condemnation! Alternately disposed to cast myself at her feet and admit the justice of her sentence, and to turn upon herself the vengeance that had already manifested itself towards her family, I felt, when she withdrew in all the dignity of wounded pride from my presence, that the whole aim of my existence was frustrated!

"For two following days I shut myself up in surly desperation. On the third, I merged from my solitude, with the amended purpose of imploring forgiveness, and offering atonement. She was gone! She had quitted Paris! Mistrusting the protection of her brother-in-law, she was on her road to England, — to the safe-keeping of an honourable husband!

"'My unfortunate sister is the companion of my inauspicious journey,' said the letter she addressed to me from Dover. 'Should the effort prove too much for her

declining health, it is *you* who will have sentenced her to death. Apprised by Lord Willesden of his insolvency, and the ruin of her innocent children, she had not courage to abide, in a strange land, the penalty likely to be enforced by a nature ruthless as your own. Her husband remains behind to answer you with his person. Do your worst! If you *dare*, render Lord Willesden your prisoner,—as he is already your dupe!"

"But you did *not* dare!" interrupted Basil Annesley,—whose mind appeared suddenly relieved from some terrible apprehension. "You had not courage to inflict a further injury on this noble-minded woman?"

"You say truly! I had *not!* But others were more relentless. Some months after her return to England, slanderous tongues announced to her husband that my flagitious scheming had prospered. As I live and breathe, Basil, I had no share in the

tale of scandal. It was the diabolical invention of some enemy! Yet groundless as it was, it drove the unhappy man into the grave!

"He perished, Basil Annesley, at the head of his regiment, on the field of honour; but it was with the cruel conviction that his wife was an adulteress, and his unborn child the offspring of shame! Unhappy woman! To be cursed with a husband and a lover alike incapable of appreciating the virtue of her soul!

"The poor atonement in my power to offer, was not withheld. But far more contumeliously than even her proud father had rejected me, did she decline the offer of my hand. Regarding me as the assassin of her brother, the murderer of her husband, she spurned me from her presence. She spoke of her duty towards her children!—*Her children!* The girl had been, by its father's will, already withdrawn from her protection, as unworthy to preside over its education.

The boy—the innocent boy now nestling in her bosom—had been rejected by him as the offspring of crime. Basil—Basil! Why did not your little hands upraise themselves to intercede in my behalf?"

"My presentiments, then, have not deceived me!" cried the young man, starting from his seat. "It is, indeed, my dear and unfortunate mother who has been through life your victim!"

"My *victim!* There was not an earthly sacrifice I would not have made but to obtain permission to become the humblest of her household servants! My *victim!* No, no! I was hers! Maddened by her indifference, her abhorrence, I now rushed into the most frantic excesses. I flew to the gaming-table. The cold, calculating Clerval played, for once, like a child.

"My lucky star deserted me. My long-boasted opulence was gradually melting away. Even the securities I held in pledge from Willesden, were at length staked and

lost,—lost to those who did not hesitate to expose him to reprisals, attributed by his unfortunate wife and family to myself!

"On the brink of ruin, I looked around me for some desperate chance whereby to retrieve my fortunes, or achieve an honourable death. War was raging in Germany, and I joined the army of the Sambre and Meuse as a volunteer. By degrees my heart warmed to the standard under which I had enlisted. All other pains and pleasures exhausted, the excitement arising from a military career under an able and dauntless commander, was a bewildering novelty; and as a means of inflicting humiliation on a country allied with my natural enemies, I embarked all the energies of my nature in the cause of the Eagle of France.

"Like all other men in earnest in their profession, during the supremacy of Napoleon, advancement followed. I was speedily rewarded by a commission. I was promised further advancement. But my military ca-

reer was destined to a cruel and unexpected interruption.

"In traversing Heidelberg, in the course of my campaign, remembering it to be the birth-place and abiding-place of Verelst, I took occasion to make such inquiries respecting the condition of my sister as proved that her letters addressed to my father, (which had fallen into my hands,) intimating her miserable destitution, conveyed no exaggerated picture of poor Rachael's fallen fortunes.

"Pampered by prosperity, the stubbornness of cruelty was still rampant within me; for the evil practised against myself had taken root in my soul, and was bringing forth bitter fruits. Having sworn never to behold her more, I made it a virtue to adhere to my oath, and though moved to alleviate her misfortunes, bestowed my humble gift upon her in the shape of alms from a stranger, rather than as an offering of brotherly love.

"The jealous feelings of Verelst took alarm. He pursued the Capitaine de Clerval who had presumed to send a gift of money to his lovely wife. But the artist's application for an audience having been answered by an insult, the indignant man waylaid my coming forth, and rewarded my insolence with a blow.

"In the intemperance of the moment, I drew my sword,—rushed upon him,—would fain have fought him—have killed him! But no more than a slight wound had signalized my frenzy. I was seized and placed in arrest. Imperial discipline was rigorous on such points; and I, so lately the man of millions, might possibly have been shot like a dog, after a hasty court-martial, had not Verelst come forward with attestations of—— Guess on what plea the fool pretended to preserve my life!—GUESS!"

Basil Annesley shrugged his shoulders in intimation of ignorance.

"*Insanity!*—And his wife being my

nearest of kin, his attestations were received with deference! While I stood by, in custody, and listened, the fellow presumed to swear before my face that, for some years past, my conduct had been indicative of aberration of intellect!

"It is true his absurd depositions saved my life. But at what a cost! to be sent back to Paris under escort, as a lunatic! To be deposited in Charenton, till the physicians decided in my case! In the irritation of all I had to undergo, I accused Verelst and my sister of malicious and interested views,—of getting me shut up for life, with a view to obtain the administration of my remaining property."

"Verelst is as incapable of such an act of baseness as the first noble in the land!" cried Basil, with warm indignation.

"I agree with you,—now that I judge the case dispassionately. But wait, young gentleman, till you have been seized and manacled,—till you have had your head

shaved, and been starved and douched at the caprice of an experimentalizing apothecary,—to judge equitably of the motives of your incarcerator!"—said Osalez, with a shudder. "Had my poor brother-in-law entered my cell at Charenton, I am convinced I should have throttled him on the spot!

"There, however, Basil,—there, as elsewhere, gold proved my sword and my buckler! One of the visiting surgeons was a shrewd worldly man, who soon saw through the nature of my malady and position. Trust me, that when he proposed confederacy, I drove no hard bargain with him in assigning the sum for which he was to get me placed in a Maison de Santé, as partly convalescent; and, in process of time, pronounce me cured, and obtain my enlargement.

"It was during that gloomy interval of imprisonment, Basil, that my nature became thoroughly desophisticated. I learnt, by hard authority, with how many of the so-

styled necessaries of human life, human nature is able to dispense. I soon found myself the happier for lacking menial attendance. Under such circumstances, my greatest luxury was to be alone.

"Within the four bare walls of my cell, the expansion of my own glowing mind supplied all the splendours of the East. I carried my paradise within me. My dreams were now as glowing of the gardens of Gulistan, or the white walls of Cadiz, as my waking impressions had been of yore; and lo! I said unto my soul—What need of costly tapestries,—what need of vessels of gold or vessels of silver,—what need of the toys of art, the marble of the sculptor, the canvas of the painter,—since, abiding here in solitary self-contemplation, I am as much in enjoyment of these things as when long use and habit rendered them inostensible and unnoticed under the roof of my stately Spanish palace or Parisian villa? Compulsory starvation, compulsory vigils, compulsory self-

attendance, — soon rendered my penance habitual, and blunted the edge of the most cutting hardships. From that period, I became master of myself, and, consequently, doubly the master of other people.

" Not to weary you with details, suffice it that I was eventually restored to freedom. But instead of profiting by my liberty to resume the enervate habits of life which those four years of thraldom had rendered irksome, I thenceforward devoted myself, solely and exclusively, to the worship of Mammon. Solitary reflection had convinced me that MONEY was the omnipotent instrument by which I might still work out my projects of vengeance. I resolved to punish my insolent brother-in-law by all the tortures of poverty, while millions were amassing in my coffers; and eventually bequeath them to some public charity or national foundation, while my kindred were begging their bread, and the woman who had twice cast me from her was exposed to all the

bitterness of want! There was ecstasy to me *then*, Basil, in these projects of vengeance! Yes—ecstasy!—if GOD have reserved to Himself the dealing of vengeance, is it not because it is a pleasure worthy the Immortals?"

"You deceive yourself, Mr. Osalez!" remonstrated Basil;—"or you would deceive *me*. Deal frankly with both,—and you will own that you experienced dearer delight last night, in your reconciliation with those nearest to you in blood, than ever presented itself to your enjoyment in the course of your projects of retribution."

The silence of Abednego seemed to concede tacit assent to this proposition. But he contented himself with replying evasively, "If I resorted to the joys of revenge to keep alive the lazy current of my blood, what else had they left me?—England had closed the lists of fair and honourable ambition to my approach,—and through *them*, access to the joys of domestic life. Society

had driven me like a dog from its gates. What wonder, then, that the hapless brute, thus spurned, should become rabid, and snarl, and turn upon his persecutors ?

"No matter! I am not here to advocate my own virtues with a view to canonization! Enough that I soon found abundant and increasing joy in the procreation of wealth. To me it superseded all human instincts.—Gold was my wife,—my child,—my kith, —my kin!—No labour was too great—no humiliation too abject for its acquirement. The filthiest mud seemed not to defile my fingers, in which I discerned a single glittering particle! Perhaps you will accuse these instincts as characteristic of my Jewish origin!—No, Basil! They were not *in* me when I wandered with *her* among the orange groves of Cadiz;—they were not *in* me when howled by fools and bigots out of the House of Commons!—They were cravings—morbid cravings,—engendered by that gnawing

famine of the soul to which I was scornfully condemned by my fellow-men!

"The pursuit of wealth became a pastime rather than a toil. I delighted in the cunning disguises by which I attempted to penetrate the motives, and overmaster the destinies, of my clients. Most men are fond of stage playing, if they would but own it;—some in their amateur theatres,—some on the velvet foot-cloths of a court,—some in the pulpit,—some in the rostrum,—some on the wool-sack,—some on the Bench of Bishops;—I, in Paulet-street, St. Agnes le Clare!

"I was as proud of the dramatic genius which enabled me to go, like the wind, hither and thither where I listed, as a Judge after delivering a pathetic charge, or the Rector or Chancellor of a University when playing the bigwig for the be-wonderment of dunces!—I had my rat-holes, in which to chaffer with my Jewish confraternity.—I had my counting-houses, and tables of the

money-changers, for those having a fairer footing in the Temple of Mammon;—and, lastly, I had a decent home wherein to treat with the great capitalists of the day, so as to induce their belief in my non-exemption from the ordinary tastes and appetites of mortal nature. I saw that, by standing too far aloof from the sinful lusts of the flesh—the pomps and vanities of life—I must pass for either saint or—devil!

"These motley vicissitudes served to redeem human existence from its monotony. I was alternately king and beggar,—Richard in the tragedy, Abel Drugger in the farce. Gods! how have I laughed in my sleeve, at the dupehood of the world! What puppets were the great in my hands—what tools the powerful!—Exquisite, indeed, was the triumph of watching the manœuvres of those who treated me as an engine, and who the while were mere implements for machinations of my own!

"In Paris, among the wits and philosophers

of that unquiet time which gloried in its scepticism of human virtue, how often had I indulged in speculations touching the mysteries of the human heart, which I now possessed means and opportunities of putting to the proof !—I doubt whether any living mortal ever enjoyed occasions such as mine, of searching into the darker recesses of our nature. I have watched the corruption generated by prosperity—I have watched the corruption generated by adversity. Each has its specific gangrene,—its peculiar and distinctive loathsomeness; and it may be doubted whether the sores of Lazarus, or those of Dives, be vilest in the sight of the Almighty Judge of human infirmities.

"You, my dear young friend, have seen more, since your connexion with myself, than other young men of your caste, of the influence of prodigality on human character. But what *you* have witnessed is a speck of dust by comparison with the basenesses that have fallen under *my* observation. Among

my millionary colleagues and starving clients, I have examined the influence of money upon the soul, till I shuddered at the results of my scrutiny! Like the Indian nut which generates so subtle a vapour that, when forming part of a freight, it penetrates into the innermost recesses of every case and package in the same, reducing the contents to rags and decay, the influence of GOLD corrupts all that is pure, and attenuates all that is solid in the human mind. It is a touchstone I tremble to apply to a character in whose stability my affections are interested!—For the sake of sordid gain, I have seen brother renounce brother,—I have seen friend forsake friend,—I have known parents, in their hour of need, betray the interests of their children,—I have known children, to obtain the relief of which they stood in need, lose all sight of the feelings of their parents. Woman, Basil, woman, who was evidently intended by her Creator as the nearer approach to the an-

gelic beings of a happier sphere, becomes worse than earthly,—worse than fiendish,—the moment the demoniacal appetite for gold gains the ascendancy over her moral faculties.—I swear to you, my dear Basil, that were my affections pledged to the most beautiful of her sex, to discover her telling over a sum of money with the greedy eye of avarice would as effectually revolt my feelings, as to find her fair frame distorted and defiled by some incurable distemper.

" Such were still my sentiments and occupations, Basil Annesley, till the period of our first encounter!—But the moment a hand so young and stainless as yours poured oil into my wounds, new life was enkindled within me. I seemed to espy noble and undreamed of purposes in MONEY. I began to suspect that it might be converted into a means of human happiness as well as of transitory pleasure. Your interest in behalf of Verelst brought the exile of my sister to my knowledge.—Mercy was dawning within

me. Peace brooded in my heart, over her dove-like couplets!—

"I visited the family in disguise. I learnt to love their virtues, admire their graces. I have less compunction, Basil, for having abandoned those lovely girls to the rough schooling of adversity; for it has left them good, true, generous, tender,—all that the gilding of luxury disguises in the courtly bred, if it do not destroy.—For worlds, I would not have their honest natures resemble the frippery do-nothingness of your friends, the Maitlands!—nor would I have had them heartless and proud—like—*like* HER,—for all the happiness I trust my old age may yet derive from their gentle companionship!—

"And now, Basil Annesley, (lest I see you again place your hand on your waistcoat pocket in search of the trumpery toy by which your useless moments are admeasured,) I release you.—I ask no opinion, no sentence, on what I have related. I see, by

your altered countenance towards me, that a revolution hath been effected in your mind. Be not over-hasty.—Ponder over these things in your heart, and maturely weigh them ere we meet again."

Relieved by this intimation, the young soldier rose calmly and coldly from his seat, and glanced towards the panel by which he had accomplished his entrance.

"No need to sneak out *there!*" cried the old man, assuming a more cheerful tone. "I shall be proud to introduce you into another of my households." Then, throwing open the door of a dining-room, hung with master-pieces of the old masters, he conducted him through a handsome library into a snug dressing-room, where his well-brushed coat and hat, his handkerchief and gloves, formally set out, were awaiting him, beside a commodious toilet-table, preparatory to quitting the house. Involuntarily, young Annesley shrugged his shoulders.

"You are thinking of Delahay-street,

eh?" observed Osalez, with a smile.—"To me both places are of the same account.—My heart and soul are not empty enough to find room for petty wants or repinings.—

'When the mind's free, the body's delicate.'

Should you ever acquire objects in life of the engrossing nature of those that absorb the attention of a great capitalist, you will cease to take thought of the softness of your couch, or the flavour of your dishes.—Yet why not do myself fuller justice in your eyes, by avowing that half the privations to which you have seen me expose myself, were acts of voluntary penance?

"Alas, Basil! if not a Jew, I merit, I own, the charge made by St. Paul, of being 'in all things too superstitious.' I incline much to sacrifices of atonement. That you sought me, Basil, and befriended me amid the wretchedness which appeared so real, seems intended by the Almighty as repayment for all my self-inflicted tortures."

While buttoning on his coat, Osalez intimated to his visitor a desire to transport him in his carriage to the West end of the town.

"Still harping on your horse?" cried he, when his young visitor again excused himself. "Fear nothing.—By my orders, Zebedee conveyed the beast back to your stables half an hour ago."

"Why, you do not even know my stables," cried Basil, almost with indignation.

"Pardon me!—I know all and everything that concerns you. And now, will you come back and dine with me quietly in Bernard-street?"

Already Basil had excused himself, while Osalez was about to step into a chariot awaiting him at the door of the handsome mansion, from the spacious hall of which they were emerging together,—when an intimation that the Verelsts were already installed the inmates of their wealthy kinsman induced him to pause. His scarcely audible

mutterings about a change of dress were instantly scouted by Abednego.

"How long have you been such a coxcomb?" cried he. "The last time you dined with me, you had not changed your dress. Why so much respect for the Verelsts?—Have you not been the child of their house,—the friend of their fireside?—At all events, come with me, and I will drop you when we reach Temple Bar."

"You have persuaded Verelst, then, to give up his engagements to the Marquis?" inquired Basil, as they drove at a rapid pace through the city.

"On the contrary, I never even attempted it. I appreciate too highly an artist's independence of mind. Let him distinguish himself,—immortalize himself, if he can. So much the better and happier for them all. The girls and their mother will reside with me during his absence in the North."

On arriving in Bernard-street (for, once

installed in the carriage, Basil found it impossible to resist the old man's solicitations) young Annesley was as cheerfully welcomed by Mrs. Verelst and her daughters as ever he had been to their humble fireside, either at Heidelberg or in London.

"Ungrateful girl!" mused the young soldier, as he contemplated the open, radiant countenance of his beloved Esther. "Not a sympathizing care has she bestowed on the wretchedness she must know her present views and prospects to be creating."

And, sooth to say, Esther and Salome accosted their young friend as amiably and frankly as if there had been no Duca di San Catalda in the world.

"You have already officiated as my valet; let me now act as yours," cried Osalez, addressing Basil, and motioning to his pompous butler to lead the way to his dressing-room. "Dine with us, Basil, you must and shall. I have some Neckar wine that Verelst swears is superior to Hochhei-

mer—(Lord Maitland, no doubt, has made you a judge of Hock!)—that will open your heart and his, and carry you both back to your cordial days of old!"

CHAPTER V.

Il est vrai que dans mon Avril, calme et sévère,
J'ai vu s'éteindre plus d'un chimère
Plein de douces choses!—
Mais quoi! me croyez vous assez fou pour rêver
D'éternité des roses?

VICTOR HUGO.

THE life of Mrs. Verelst had been harassed by complications of good and evil, such as afforded ample explanation of the untimely snow shed upon her still handsome head, and of the care-worn expression of a countenance otherwise beautiful.

Educated in a mansion rivalling the palaces of the ancient merchant princes of Italy, her early habits had been luxurious

and self-indulgent. In her happy days of girlhood,—the idol of her father and brother,—it was not till the stern character of the one was embittered by disappointments in the career of his son, and the haughty temper of the other rendered austere by mortification and defeat, that she became conscious of the difficulties besetting every motherless daughter, in the household of a parent lacking the indulgence, or perhaps weakness, of maternal love, in dealing with the failings inseparable from every female nature.

The return of her brother from England, frustrated in all his prospects and purposes, had caused so severe a shock to the already failing health of the elder Osalez, that a reasonable excuse was afforded for the closing of those princely gates,—the hospitalities of which to Lord L. and his family had been so ignobly repaid. But poor Rachael, who, in the society of the accomplished object of her brother's affections, had contracted a

taste for the female companionship so essential to her ripening years, could not easily reconcile herself to the sudden loss of all her social pleasures.

Too young to be admitted into the confidence of her family, she knew not the nature of the injuries which caused the name of Lord L. to be proscribed in her father's house. She knew not in what festering griefs the illness of her father, and the sullenness of her brother, had their common origin;—for in the eagerness of her sympathy, she would have lost all sense of her own weariness of spirit. But with the usual erroneous estimation of their sex, the father and brother, mistrusting the maturity of the young girl's character, persisted in considering and treating her as a child, long after she had learned to think and feel as a woman.

The elder Osalez, confined to his sick room, conceived that he was fully discharging his parental duty by the ardent

young girl, whose affections had been encouraged to expansion by intermingling freely with the once extended circle of his hospitable fireside, in providing her with the means of completing her education under the care of a vigilant duenna; and poor Rachael, heart-sick of her present isolation,—longing for the cheering sounds of human voices, and the genial aspect of human faces, to diversify the blank monotony of that echoing mansion and those deserted gardens,—was only too happy to devote herself to studies which at least served to place her in communication with enlightened and encouraging professors.

Unfortunately, *all* of those selected for the purpose, by the relatives pre-absorbed in their own eager ambitions, were not as well chosen as the gray-haired rhetorician, who was to perfect her knowledge of her own and other languages;—or the harsh and crabbed chapel-master, who instructed her in singing and counterpoint. The long

continuance of the Peninsular War had been fatal to the progress and cultivation of the arts. Native painters were at that period rare, and professors rarer; and, but for the number of foreign artists, attracted at all periods, whether of peace or war, to Spain, for the study of the master-pieces of Murillo, Velasquez, and Ribera, or for the contemplation of the native beauties of the country and its moresque antiquities,—it might have been difficult to cultivate the natural genius early testified by Rachael Osalez.

Startling was it,—fatally startling,—to the enthusiastic recluse, to find in the new professor secured for her by the lavish liberality of her father, a man so utterly different from the crabbed and severe instructors with whom her days were passed. Simple as a child, yet impassioned as a poet, Gerald Verelst, enabled to converse with his lovely pupil in a language unknown to her duenna, had not the most remote idea that, in the wild and picturesque descriptions of

solitary excursions in Granada, with which he was charming the ear of the merchant's daughter, he was doing more than communicating to her his energetic admiration for the Moorish reliques illustrating the exquisite landscapes of her native country; and for weeks and months, he continued to enliven the daily lessons which were making a first-rate artist of the Señora Osalez, with the stores of his observant and cultivated mind.

The young painter was the first person who had ever treated Rachael otherwise than as a child. The young painter was the first to discern the intelligence brightening her eyes,—the gentleness of character subduing that intelligence to womanly reserve; and it was only natural that the timid girl, thus neglected and thus spiritually crushed, should incline eagerly toward the more congenial being, for whom she was as the bright particular star of the foreign country, whose delicious climate and striking beauties had rendered him for a time forgetful of his own.

Happily,—very happily,—were the unconscious hours elapsing for both, when something in the altered expression of poor Rachael's countenance,—the mantling bloom and rapturous glances that replaced her previous pallid languor, arrested the attention of her brother.

Hardened in nature by the wrongs to which he had been subjected,—the victim of despotism became a despot in his turn; and a further scrutiny having confirmed his suspicions, the German artist was driven from the gates of the rich merchant of Cadiz, as contumeliously as Abednego Osalez had been from those of the severe Lord L.

No argument,—scarcely a remonstrance,—was used to persuade the astonished Rachael, to whom this inconsiderate interpretation of her feelings afforded a first insight into the existence of her first attachment, that she was compromising the happiness of her future life by descending from its appointed sphere. All that was done by her

father and brother was to opprobriate the object of her love; and to acquaint her that she was to sink anew into the joyless, friendless solitude, to which her intimacy with Gerald had afforded so welcome an interruption. They chose to rend asunder, with uncompromising violence, a tie which might have been effectually loosened by a gentle and judicious hand; and as the nature of Rachael partook of those fiery elements, which had already manifested themselves in that of her brother,—indicative, probably of the Oriental origin of both,—instead of submitting to the parental decree with the worldly propriety displayed by the daughter of Lord L., around whose position the forms of conventional life had established a hedge of thorns impervious to the audacity of young Osalez,—she eloped, —the merchant's daughter eloped with the imprudent artist;—and by the ministry of the chaplain of an English frigate, to whom the displeasure of the rich Osalez was a mat-

ter of indifference,—became his happy and devoted wife.

As the Money-lender had truly observed to Basil Annesley, at that period, there was little that was human in his feelings. The leprosy of avarice, by which his nature was fated to be animated, was already increasing its virulent influence within; and he seemed to take pride and revengeful pleasure in crushing this innocent attachment, and witnessing the ruin of one who had witnessed his own;—one who had loved,—nay, who still loved with unchanging fondness the faithless object of his own betrayed affections. Instead, therefore, of exercising his influence to bring about a reconciliation between the young couple and his exasperated father, it was a relief to him, when at length the Verelsts suddenly quitted Cadiz;—the artist being apprehensive that, unless he exerted himself to return at once to his modest German home, he might exhaust his means, and

find himself and his bride penniless in the country which was no longer her own.

And thus, poor Rachael, rendered delicate by luxurious nurture, took her departure for the adopted land of her husband, almost with the uncertainty of means for its attainment! They reached Germany, however, in safety. By travelling in the humblest manner, they contrived to place themselves under the protection of the artist's family, where treatment far more generous was extended to them, by the poor parents of Verelst, than by the gold-hardened descendants of Osalez, the Jew.

How happy seemed to the young bride that homely cordial household, where she was welcomed as a child, and worshipped as a queen! How ennobling appeared to her the humble tasks which *then*, in the exuberance of health and strength, were undertaken almost as a pastime! It seemed impossible to one reared as *she* had been, that their poverty could be fated to *last*. Those

who had loved her so dearly, *must* speedily relent in her favour, now that absence would serve to soften the recollection of her disobedience, and quicken the pulses of paternal love; and how delightful would it be, in abjuring the penurious habits to which, for a time, she was condemned, to confer riches and comfort on those who were now so cheerfully sharing with her their own limited subsistence!

But alas! these April hopes bloomed, and faded, and brought forth no fruit. The rich men were ruthless. Wounded to the quick by the humiliating connexion which seemed devised expressly to complete their mortifications in the sight of their fellow citizens, the elder Osalez expired without a word of forgiveness to his absent daughter; and the vindictive brother of Rachael departed for the East, without exhibiting the smallest mollification in her favour.

And now it was that the wife of Verelst began for the first time to regret her im-

prudent marriage. Not on her own account; for her tenderness for the single-hearted object of her choice was strengthened a hundred-fold by her cognizance of the devotion of his attachment. But because she saw that, by his rash connexion, his fortunes were marred for ever; and that his parents, instead of deriving for their old age a comfortable maintenance from his exertions, were forced to do their part towards the support of his indigent family.

Still, supported as she was by the adoration of Verelst, by the pious and tender care of the old people, and above all, cheered by the endearments of the little one who was already come to render their slender means more slender, it was impossible to despond; more especially, as the quiet unostentatious habits of the fellow-citizens of her husband were of a nature to lessen the grievance of the burthen of poverty.

For poor Rachael's health was still unimpaired; and the girlish elasticity of limb

which enabled her to accompany her husband in his excursions among the neighbouring forests for the cultivation of his art,—where alone it can be fully cultivated, by careful examination of the ever-varying phenomena of nature,—opened a thousand new sources to her enjoyments. While ascending together the rugged sites of the Bergstrasse, or penetrating into the mysterious recesses of the pined forests, so different from the glossy and burnished verdure of her southern home, she was enabled to forget the luxurious splendours of her father's house, and eager to avow that the companionship of the kindly being whose side she never quitted, was worth all the vessels of gold and vessels of silver, the pomp of menials, and wilderness of marble, she had abandoned to become his wife.

But, alas, when to the evils of poverty were added those of physical disablement, privation assumed a new and far more bitter character! After the birth of little Salome,

having too soon reassumed her humble household tasks, the happy mother became converted into a languishing invalid. She never knew a day's health again. She was never again able to relieve her poor mother-in-law from the toils of her ménage; and Verelst, in addition to his numerous cares, had to become nurse and attendant on his helpless wife, and her equally helpless children.

The lapse of years served only for the extension of misfortune. Other children were born,—born like true children of affliction, frail and delicate,—and, consequently, demanding more than their elders that intervention of maternal care which was more than ever unattainable.—Every further exertion of poor Rachael served only to increase her helplessness; and all she could do for her children was to soothe their ailing infancy with that inexhaustible tenderness of mother-love which sickness could not tire, or privation enfeeble. She, whose infirm condition required comfort above all

other women, deprived herself of the necessaries of life, to soften the condition of the little fragile creatures who were dragging out their hopeless existence on her knees,—who lived only to exhaust *her* means of life,—yet over whose dying bed she sorrowed with the same yearning affection that wrings tears from some haughty mother over the gilded cradle to which all her previous duties have been performed by hirelings!

It was beside the graves of these little victims that the heart of the artist's wife conceived its first resentful feelings against her brother. *They* had sprung up and withered like winter flowers, uncheered by a single ray of sunshine. For the others, there was hope,—for the others, time might effect those miracles and those favourable reverses of fortune which the sanguine hopes of a mother's heart are never weary of anticipating. But for the dead there could be no compensation! Their little sufferings unassuaged,—their little wants unappeased,—

their passage from the cradle to the humble bier unsmoothed by those common comforts regarded by the servants of her father's house as the necessaries of life, had left an impression on the mother's heart more akin to bitterness, than a nature affectionate as hers could have been predestined to engender.

Verelst and his wife used to sit beside their scanty fire through the long, cheerless winter evenings, not daring to revert with grief to the newly-dead, lest each should aggravate the sorrow of the other;—not daring to revert with joy, to the still surviving, lest they, too, like every other earthly source of enjoyment, should be wrested from their embraces. In the singleness and truth of their mutual affection, both bewailed the day that ever they were born, each in the conviction that but for their rash union the other might have prospered!

The consciousness of this unexpressed

affection, however, was the anchor that buoyed them up against the waters of strife; so impossible is it to give way to utter despair, so long as we are satisfied of being the object of a strong, and holy, and hallowing attachment!

To this influence, may probably be attributed the perseverance with which, throughout all his domestic trials, the poor painter continued to cultivate the nobler branches of his art. In his intervals of care and toil, it was still his delight to maintain unimpaired those high aspirings of genius which lay the foundations of greatness; and though, long ere he consigned his parents to the lowly grave, he had once fervently trusted to perpetuate a name renowned in the annals of his country, he had done his part towards the maintenance of his family by becoming a humble drawing-master to the students of the university, he neglected no opportunity for the exercise of nobler powers; he con-

tinued to study diligently, as all must do who would retain the power of directing the studies of others in their turn.

His two lovely surviving children, meanwhile, were the docile pupils of their mother; and by the time young Annesley was added to the number of Verelst's scholars, the poor girls already exhibited the dawning graces of that rare loveliness which united the Spanish characteristics of their mother, with the more spiritual peculiarities of their more gifted father.

Unfortunately, the high intellectual endowments of Verelst served to attract to his class certain of the more turbulent spirits of the student-hood. The romantic incident of his encounter with his brother-in-law, at the moment of the transit of the army of Napoleon through Heidelberg, and the energy with which he had rebutted the frantic denunciations of Clerval, connected the name of the artist with a thousand heroic traditions, magnified by the spirit of

exaggeration ever prevalent in a German university ; and he had consequently become a sort of idol among the political enthusiasts whose cry was loud against French usurpation, and in favour of the confederation of a new German empire. Involuntarily, almost unconsciously, he had begun to adopt the tenets of those with whom he ought to have been connected only by the sober sense of duty uniting professor and pupil; and secure in the good faith of the truest and most simple-hearted of mankind, the reckless *carbonari* of Heidelberg held their meetings unsuspected beside the hearth of the guileless professor.

It was in vain that, on more than one occasion, the young Englishman saw fit to apprise him of the dangerous nature of the doctrines broached under his roof by enthusiasts, like the young Count Von Ehrenstein and his confraternity, while Verelst was absorbed in the composition of a new piece, or the lesson he was bestowing

on some obtuse scholar: for Basil, who, thanks to his friendlessness in the land, had been admitted into the inner sanctuary of the painter's family, and was deeply interested in their fortunes, heard with regret the interpretation placed by the gossip of the university on the incautious conduct of Verelst.

To arouse *his* attention to the mischief was, however, no easy task. His child-like nature saw no evil in the dreamy projects of the young visionaries whose enthusiasm rejuvenized his own; and the utmost Basil Annesley obtained, was an entreaty that he would not vex himself by remaining an ear-witness of the extravagances of the Ehrenstein party, but seclude himself in the society of the wife and children of his master.

To induce him to this, there needed little persuasion. Half girl, half woman,—timid yet trusting, shy yet familiar—Esther and Salome gladly adopted the young

foreigner as the brother of whom they had been so long desirous; and when Basil returned to England to be gazetted into the guards, he left his old master exposed to the most perilous involvement in the wild political projects of those who regarded him as too simple even to consult ; and poor Salome in scarcely less danger of conceiving for young Ehrenstein the same affectionate preference which Esther had already unsuspectingly conceded to himself.

On one of these points, at least, he had felt it his duty to admonish the gentle sufferer whom he loved almost as a mother. But Mrs. Verelst, though she recognised the whole extent of danger to which her husband was exposing himself, assured Basil of the impossibility of inspiring her husband with mistrust, or of rendering his personal risk a matter of moment in his eyes; and she took leave of her young English friend with mournful forebodings of the truth of his prophecy that, sooner or

later, the rigorous hand of authority would startle Verelst into a sense of his reckless self-exposure.

It was not, however, till he was gone, gone never to return, that either the mother or her girls became fully conscious how entire had been their adoption of the stranger as a child of the house. Often and bitterly did they weep together over the loss of their devoted friend,—their pleasant companion. Esther and Salome were still too young for their mother to entertain any uneasiness at the excess of their regret. But they made no secret of their innocent conviction that their home was no longer the same home, nor Heidelberg the same city, now that their brother had departed from among them.

The long year that ensued was a year of trial to them all. The loss of the pleasant scholar, in whom he had taken such delight, produced almost as fatal effect on the spirits of the artist as of his girls; and the utter

listlessness into which he subsided, rendered him more than ever indifferent to the freedom of political discussion, too often prevailing among the youths who assembled at his house under the name of "class." When, therefore, in the sequel, the constituted authorities of the university decided upon the expulsion of all convicted of belonging to the mystic association headed by the Graf Von Ehrenstein, it followed as a matter of course, that the imprudent man, under whose roof their meetings had taken place, should be banished from the Grand Duchy.

And whither was the necessitous family to betake itself? Alas! whither do all political refugees betake themselves, but to the self-styled land of liberty! On the present occasion, however, there was every plea for the adoption of England as a refuge, in the maternal origin of the infirm mother, and the ill-concealed predilections of the poor girls; —and compulsory exile having necessitated the sale of his family effects, Verelst carried

with him the means of a single year's support; after which he had every reason to rely upon the exercise of his abilities, in a country that boasts so many wealthy aristocratic patrons of the arts, for his future subsistence.

Such were the circumstances under which poor Verelst had established himself in London. But the total ignorance of the whole family, as to its habits and expenses, soon reduced their little stock almost to extinction. It was difficult for them to understand that things estimated the necessaries of life at Heidelberg should become luxuries in London; or that the vegetable diet essential almost to the health of foreigners, could be ruinous in a country where the fruits of the earth appear to abound. As if every thing that is costly did not abound in a land where capital is abundant; or, as if the poor Verelsts would have dreamed of supplying themselves with plate, because

the silversmiths' windows of London exhibit such prodigal suppliances!

So it was, however, that towards the end of the second year, Verelst, who, so far from having secured aristocratic patrons, had fallen into the extortionate hands of Jewish picture-dealers,—had involved himself to a degree that must have consigned him to prison, but for the providential intervention of Basil Annesley!

Not that for worlds the poor artist would have taxed the generous assistance of his former pupil. But Basil was their constant guest; Basil saw, one by one, the annihilation of their hopes of profit, from the meritorious exertions of the painter; and when at length fairly taken by surprise by the rash enterprise of Esther, as a public singer, he *insisted* upon being admitted into the confidence of the family; and, as he soon discovered, just in time to preserve them from irretrievable ruin!

Such was their relative position at the moment of his first introduction to A. O., whose aid he sought only to enable him to meet the terms of the acceptances for which he had made himself liable in favour of Verelst,—how little conceiving the more intimate claims of consanguinity possessed by the necessitous family upon the sympathies of the great capitalist! As difficult was it to conceive a bond of relationship between the feeble, poverty-stricken, spirit-broken wife of the German artist, and the merchant princes of Cadiz—as between the beggarman of St. Agnes le Clare, and the wealthy stockbroker, whose dignified deportment and colossal undertakings seemed so utterly incompatible with the petty brokerage and contemptible shifts of the Money-lender—A. O.!

CHAPTER VI.

Oft in my waking dreams do I
Live o'er again that happy hour,
When midway on the mount I lay
Beside the ruin'd tower.
The moonlight, stealing o'er the scene,
Had blended with the mists of eve;
And she was there,—my hope,—my joy,—
My own dear Genevieve.

COLERIDGE.

THE London season was now in process of revival. Like a young crocodile bursting from its egg, it was beginning to sun itself in the scorching and unprofitable waste of sand wherein its pleasures and its mischiefs are apportioned. The pavement of St. James's-street had re-gathered into a jab-

bering crowd its insolent population; and hackney-coaches were beginning to rumble unnoticed amid the growing multiplicity of private equipages, dashing through the streets of the West End.

Even old Carrington, at the commencement of his twentieth season about town, was beginning, like the old sooty trees in St. Paul's church-yard, to put forth a few leaves and airs of rejuvenescence. New swarms, the produce of the old, were gathering in the club windows; and the cry for news, the habitual croak of the frogs, swamped in the morass of fashionable dulness, was great in the land.

They had *done* with the "smash at Rochester House." Let not the most prodigal of dukes presume to hope that his ruin will form more than a nine days' wonder. The Rochesters were gone abroad, and nobody so much as cared to know what was become of them. Every one had inquired to whom his Grace's French cook

had engaged himself; and everybody ascertained *who* were the fortunate purchasers of his cellar of wines.—What more could the fashionable world desire to hear about the matter?

Most welcome, therefore, to the gaping loungers of Crocky's, was the hint in general circulation, (previous to obtaining infamous notoriety in the papers,) that crash the first was about to be succeeded by crash the second; and that Lord Maitland was soon to follow the example of the Duke of Rochester, and leave forty thousand pounds worth of plate and furniture, to pay an aggregate of one hundred thousand of debts!

It is true there were some score or two of intimate friends who, on the break up of the establishment in Arlington-street, were sure of having their dinner to seek elsewhere, twice or thrice a week,—besides having an inordinate proportion of their waste mornings thrown upon their hands.

Still, this species of worldlings is seldom of a calculating nature. In the present day of ostentation, so lavishly scattered are the manna and quails of fashionable prodigality, that it is almost more difficult to find guests for dinner-parties, than dinner-parties for guests; and there is always some newly-inheriting blockhead or ninny of fortune, just come of age, to be sponged upon by the cormorants of the aristocracy,—needy honourables,—and spendthrift lords.

On the whole, therefore, they were almost as well satisfied to have Lord Maitland's ruin to gossip about, as his claret to drink, or his daughters to flirt with!

"It really only serves him right!"—was the charitable summing-up of one who had been his co-mate in the Jockey Club and the House of Lords, ever since either arrived at years of indiscretion. "Maitland used to call himself an unlucky fellow on the turf. Now, *unlucky* is a very plausible word for *blundering!* When a man is

'unlucky' from year's-end to year's-end, without a chance of retrieving himself, he *must* know, or ought to know, that the bent of his genius does not lie that way. The turf, to make it answer, requires a man of very superior mind. Many a Chancellor of the Exchequer would be puzzled in making up a book! And really it was poor Maitland's duty, as a family man, when he found himself the dupe of every stud-groom or trainer that came in his way, to adopt some other pursuit. Instead of which, look at his losses at Ascot, last year,—at Epsom, this,—at Newmarket, every year of his life!"

"Maitland was certainly as regularly *done* as a man could wish to be!" rejoined another, (whose name was inscribed to the amount of some thousands in the registers of A. O.) "But what can a man expect who gets into the hands of the Jews? To my certain knowledge, Maitland has been raising money for years, at the rate of ten,

twenty,—thirty per cent.! What rent-roll can stand against that sort of thing? The moment one's cursed stewards find that money is an object, they throw such obstacles in one's way as double the amount of interest, clapped on by those wretched Money-lenders. As to timber, Maitland Castle will soon be puzzled to furnish a broomstick!"

But of all the scoffers who jeered over the downfall of their hospitable entertainer, Carrington was the worst,—inasmuch as the levity of a grey head is the worst of levities. When taxed by his brother officers with his attentions to Lucy Maitland, such as it was now his duty to bring to a serious proposition, the old beau kept up the farce of youthful dandyism, by protesting that he had "*meant* nothing," and that it was no fault of his if the London girls made a dead set at a man, and then fancied the advances had proceeded from himself.

"I was not more at the Maitlands than

twenty other fellows!" said he, craning his long throat in his stock.

"But at *your* age, old boy," cried Wilberton, "you have no business to be doing what twenty other fellows are doing; you ought to be shewing us an example, and mending our manners. For instance, it was nothing *my* going to Arlington Street, or Lady Maitland inviting me,—because every body knew it was only as a stop-gap. A younger brother,—a butterfly like myself,—passed in the house like the idle wind, which men regard not! While *you*, my dear Carr,—you, with your comfortable little estate in Hampshire—Wiltshire,—(where the deuce is it?—no matter!)—you, with your comfortable little estate and family mansion, cannot pay attention to a girl without seriously compromising either yourself or *her*. If I were John Maitland, I vow to Heaven I would call you out! We shall be having that poor girl in a deep decline,

produced by the volatility of the Dowager Colonel!"

It was partly under the influence of this bantering, and partly for the gratification of his own inordinate curiosity, that Carrington consented to accompany Wilberton to Arlington Street.

"It will be but decent," said both, "if we leave a card of compliment before these people go out of town."

But Lady Maitland was one of those people who both preach and practise the doctrine of putting a good face upon the worst of matters. Lest any shyness on *her* part should seem to confirm the unpleasant rumours in circulation concerning the family, she chose to receive morning visitors up to the very day of resigning the family mansion to the new tenants; and while the two girls sat, nervous and out of spirits, fully aware of the ruin of at least *their* prospects in life, she continued to assign the most plausible and mendacious pretexts for their

thus absenting themselves from town at the very commencement of the season.

"It is rather hard on Lucy and her sister, to carry them off just as the gaieties are beginning!" said she, "but these physicians are so peremptory! They assure us that Kissingen will be of no sort of service to Lord Maitland's gout, unless he begins the waters at the very commencement of the season."

"I thought I had understood," observed the Dowager Colonel,—who always "understood" best the things concerning which people wished to keep him in the dark,—"that Lord Maitland was to remain at Mivart's till the close of the session, and *then* join your ladyship at Wiesbaden or Kissingen, or wherever it may be?"

"Certainly," replied Lady Maitland,—in some confusion,—"certainly,—certainly. But it is necessary that *we* should be on the spot early to secure proper accommodation for the family. In those kind of

places, if you arrive late, you get the worst apartments of the worst hotel at the dearest rate. The Russians monopolize everything!"

And in order to avoid the stare of incredulity manifested in the disagreeable countenance of old Carrington, her ladyship now began to talk about the charming rococo shops she was assured she should find at Rotterdam; and an exquisite fan which some curiosity-hunting countess of her acquaintance had picked up among the Dutch Jews on the quays in that amphibious city.

All she could do perforce of hypocrisy was done to give to her enforced exile the air of a party of pleasure; and Lucy Maitland, who had hailed with delight the arrival of two of her brother's friends, in the hopes they might let fall tidings of Basil Annesley, felt utterly ashamed of the adroit disingenuousness with which she heard her mother varnish over their retreat.

Young Wilberton, who, though weak, was

really good-natured, took particular pains to appear convinced they were making an amiable personal sacrifice to the health of the head of the family; and when,—on some allusion to a change in the distribution of the furniture in the morning-room, (produced by the removal of certain family pictures and the musical instruments of the girls, which had been sent down to Maitland Castle,) he saw tears come into the eyes of Lucy and her sister,—was too sincerely sorry for them not to put a speedy term to his visit.

"If you should see Mr. Annesley," stammered Lucy Maitland, as she extended her parting hand towards him, "pray tell him how much we regretted not to have seen and wished him good bye, previous to our departure from England. I trust we shall often hear through my brother of his happiness and welfare."

Such was the clinging to a vain illusion, with which the poor girl fondly comforted herself in quitting England for her mortify-

ing exile; and such are the constant results of the injudicious system of familiarity maintained in England among young people, at the period of life when a look,—a word—may produce a fatal bias in the affections. For what can be hoped from the perspicacity of seventeen in ascertainnig whether the attentions of an ingratiating companion are the mere result of accident and good humour, or of real admiration and serious preference?

For the last two years, the Maitland girls had received from the knot of young men frequenting their father's house, demonstrations of admiration and regard, such as, in any other country but England, are paid only on the eve of marriage. Yet not one of these accomplished men of wit and pleasure about town but would have resented as an injury any insinuation that the ruined family had peculiar claims on their devotion. Even the popularity of the Maitlands had vanished with their father's excellent bills of fare; and had they *now* re-

quired a friendly arm to assist them through the crush-room at the opera, or call up their carriage in the crowd, it was only some *very* young ensign who was likely to present himself for the duty.

But the conduct which, in such men as Blencowe and Loftus, arose from utter heartlessness, had been in Basil Annesley the consequence of pre-occupied feelings and modest self-estimation. It had always seemed impossible to *him* that any homage *he* could shew to any living woman, was likely to engage her affections; least of all, the vain, showy Maitlands, apparently so wedded to the superficialities of life. Moreover, his attachment to Esther Verelst had been from the first of so absorbing a nature, as to render him wholly uncognizant of the susceptibilities of other women. He had frequented the Maitlands' house like all the rest of John Maitland's friends; and treated the ladies he found there with the utmost deference; but, more as belonging to the sex of his beloved mother and adored Esther,

than for any charm he discovered in their affected prettiness and flippant gossip.

At the very moment such tender parting messages were despatched to him by the mistaken Lucy, he was seated between Mrs. Verelst and her daughter, under that hospitable roof which he had very little expected ever to find sheltering guests so completely to his taste. Instead of the jargon of stock-brokers, and the lingo of bullion merchants, the table of Osalez was now cheered by a thousand affectionate references to past pleasures and early enjoyments. The brother and sister, with mutual consideration, seemed to overlook the lapse of the last painful and trying twenty years of their existence, in order to recur to the brighter season of their youth,—to the happy girlhood of Rachael ere her brother had loved or suffered—to the boyhood of Osalez, ere he conceived it possible that he should live to become the persecutor of the fair and gentle sister whose birth was hailed as the second blooming of the family tree.

But if those twain were happy,—happy in the renewal of their natural affections,—what was the warm-hearted artist on finding himself thus hand-in-hand with his former pupil,—his generous benefactor! What were the two girls, in so unlooked-for a restoration to the intimacy of their better years! What cheerful memories of the past were summoned up between the four! What happy reminiscences of pleasure parties on the banks of the Neckar, in which Basil was their guest, or fire-side evenings during his slow convalescence at Heidelberg.

Above all, how fondly did Basil, hoping to bring a blush of shame to the cheek of the guilty Esther, revert to a certain summer evening immediately before his departure from Germany, when, on the invitation of the Count Von Ehrenstein, they had enjoyed together a simple repast of wine and fruits among the ruins of the old Electoral Castle, cheered by a band of Styrian musicians who were sojourning in the town.

But though Esther Verelst perfectly re-

membered that it was on this occasion she had first become conscious of the womanly nature of her love for Basil, by her reluctance to join in some pastime that brought them too familiarly together,—it was Salome who blushed,—Salome who so rarely heard pronounced the forbidden name of Ehrenstein, and who had not yet learned to hear it with indifference.

Still, neither the momentary sadness of one of the sisters, nor the deep despair of Basil, in the belief that the thoughts of his companion must be ever and anon straying to the absent San Catalda, prevented that evening,—the first-fruits of a family union brought about by his instrumentality,—from being one of unqualified enjoyment.

"I must not indulge myself often in this way!" exclaimed Basil to himself, shrugging his shoulders with heart-sick impatience, as he quitted the house containing so many who were dear to him. Among them, and cheered by their happiness, I must not lose sight of the dearest and most

unfortunate of mothers. In order to determine on what grounds I am to stand hereafter towards the man whose destinies have been so strangely and cruelly intermingled with our own, I must hasten to Barlingham,—open my whole heart to her, and ascertain what influence this frankness may exercise in obtaining her confidence in return. Should she have aught to resent beyond what his admission has unfolded,—dear as they all are to me, never will I look upon the face of one of them again. They are now happy,—they are now prosperous,—they need me not!—Heaven be praised, I shall have no scruples of conscience in withdrawing from their society! It is *I* who am now to be pitied; all the care, and trouble, and misery of life, are henceforward for me and Barlingham! I can have no further anxiety for the fate of the future Duchess of Catalda,—or the pampered relatives and guests of—A. O.

CHAPTER VII.

The stately ships go by
To their haven under the hill,
But oh! for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.
Break—break—break,
On thy cold grey stones, oh sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me!

TENNYSON.

AT the present season of the year, Basil had little difficulty in obtaining leave of absence for his purposed visit to his mother. His brother officers were now as eager to be in London as, three months before, they had been to get out of it to Melton; and at the

close of a few days, he set out for Barlingham.

It was through the twilight of a glorious evening in May, that he *now* traversed the fields,—a glorious evening, fragrant with the breath of thyme and hawthorns,—the springy, thymy herbage buoyant beneath his feet,—and the woodlands quivering with that tender foliage of early spring, whose beauty is as of an hour's duration.

On reaching the small platform in which the surly old mansion stood isolated, his heart sunk within him. The dread of his mother's mournful voice and aspect overpowered his spirits. The embarrassment,—the chill invariably benumbing his feelings in the only spot on earth where he was entitled to feel at ease,—exercised their usual distressing spell over his heart.

On entering the sitting-room, he found Lady Annesley seated in her high-backed ebony chair, at her writing-table beside the open casement, enjoying, in solitary medita-

tion, the balmy sweetness of that delicious night. The dews were rising—the birds at rest. All was stillness, and holiness, and peace. But though she must have seen him traverse the little bridge across the moat in order to reach the old portal, she had not stirred a step to greet her only son! Nevertheless Basil flattered himself that he discerned in her countenance tokens of more than ordinary sociability and good will.

"You are welcome, my dear son!" was as much from the lips of that austere recluse, as the most impassioned caresses from a more demonstrative parent.

It was always difficult to enter into conversation with one who took so little interest in worldly events, or the frivolities with which ordinary women are amusable. Anecdotes of the day,—accounts of a new opera or forthcoming ballet,—a brilliant debate or the last new novel,—provoked from *her* a listless monosyllable—nay, sometimes the most reproving severity of countenance.

On the present occasion, to his utter surprise, she was the first to question him concerning the dissipations of London.

"With whom have you been living lately?" said she, in a more than usually cheerful voice. "The breaking up of the establishment at Rochester House must have been a loss to you,—frequenting it as you did! The Maitlands, too, I find, are about to quit London. You used to speak of their society as a resource. How will you be able to part with the pretty fair-haired Lucy, who is said to regard you with such partiality?"

"The Maitlands are the sort of girls to regard with partiality any disengaged young man disposed to trifle away his time at their house," replied Basil, becoming grave in his turn, as he reflected with what horror Lady Annesley was likely to listen to an avowal of the *motive* of his ingratitude for Lucy's predilection!

"Knowing which, you should have been on

your guard against any entanglement of the poor girl's affections," retorted his mother. "In such matters, a woman's peace of mind is the last thing considered;—though, Heaven knows, no holier trust is confided to man by the hands of his Maker, than the happiness and well-being of the woman with whom through life he is connected!"

"I heartily agree with you!" cried her son; "and should hate myself were I capable of dealing lightly or cruelly with any woman to whom I believed myself an object of genuine attachment. Lucy Maitland, on the contrary, has trifled with *me*,—since, while indulging in what London calls flirtation, she was prepared to accept the first elder son, with good prospects, who came in her way."

"In short, you are devoid of grace and sympathy! And yet," resumed Lady Annesley, "I was assured, in a letter I this day received from London, that your affections were irrevocably engaged. You have a right to look surprised, Basil! Few in-

deed are my London correspondents ; and of those, none are you likely to accuse of occupying my attention with idle gossip. I will not keep you in uneasy suspense, however;—it was Vardyn, my solicitor, who (in answer to certain instructions I sent him concerning a new codicil to my will, necessitated by the decease of poor Nicholas,) apprised me that he had good reason for knowing my son to be likely to form a most advantageous matrimonial connexion with a young lady for whom you had long entertained an attachment. Some person, you see, has been imposing on the credulity of poor Vardyn; for he is incapable of the liberty of inventing a report of any kind concerning you; least of all one calculated to pain me, with the belief that my only son had formed engagements of so serious a nature, without consulting the parent whose life has been devoted to his interest."

"Believe me, dearest mother," cried Basil, "that had I entertained in the re-

motest degree the projects which Mr. Vardyn's officiousness imputes to me, you would have been the first to be apprised. My intimacy with the Maitlands was never concealed from you."

"But you assure me that to *them* the report could not possibly attach?"

"*Certainly* not. Their father is a ruined man. A match with Lucy Maitland would have been as imprudent in a pecuniary point of view, as unadvisable in any other."

"The allusion, then, decidedly regards some lady with whose name I am unfamiliar," resumed Lady Annesley, almost with *hauteur*. "Far be it from me, Basil, to force myself on your secrets. But I am getting weary of mysteries! As we approach the grave, Basil, the claims of those we love to our entire confidence, acquire stronger force. A few short years, and all that can be known of any of us must be known *to* all. To what purpose, then,

the petty disguises and hypocrisies with which, through life, we conceal them from each other?"

Basil Annesley was more amazed to hear such a sentence escape his mother's lips than by all her previous amenity. It seemed as if, aware of the purpose of his visit to Barlingham, she were affording him all the encouragement in her power to open his heart.

"I am in some degree aware," said he, with sudden strength of resolution, "that recent circumstances,—that circumstances in which I have been involuntarily concerned,—have given rise to a general belief of my attachment; though by what means it can have reached the ears of Mr. Vardyn, I am at a loss to conceive. To make you the confidante of my feelings on this occasion, dearest mother, was needless;—for the object of my affection,—the young lady whom your solicitor describes as an heiress and the future wife of your son, is in fact

engaged or about to be engaged to another; —another far richer and more important than a poor lieutenant in the Guards."

"You are unhappy, then, my poor son!" exclaimed Lady Annesley, her features relaxing into sympathy;—"*you*, too, are unhappy. Basil,—my child,—my dear child—why have you not unfolded your troubles to your mother!"

"My mother has, I fear, experienced too many of her own to leave me an excuse for aggravating her burthen of cares!"—replied young Annesley, deeply touched by this unexpected conciliation. "Some day or other, when the wound is less recent, I will tell you, mother, the story of my idle hopes and bitter disappointments."

"That any living woman should have preferred rank and fortune to the attachment of such a heart as *his!*" burst involuntarily from the lips of Lady Annesley, as she contemplated the fine person and intelligent countenance of her son.

"My dearest mother," whispered Basil, gently taking her hand, "you would forgive *her* and cease to pity *me*, if you knew *all*. Had my attachment been rewarded by the love I sometimes feel that it deserved, had I indeed obtained the promise of her hand, your consent to our marriage would never, *never* have been granted!"

"Alas! my dear Basil," replied Lady Annesley, "your supposition comprehends a world of accusation against your mother. Great indeed must be your mistrust of my tenderness, since you can conceive me capable of opposing *any* marriage likely to secure the happiness of my only son. But you mistake me! Harsh and severe, I may at some moments have appeared;—but, believe me, no scruples of worldly pride would have determined me to withhold my sanction to a match where your affections were engaged, and the means of gentlemanly subsistence at your disposal. Vardyn described the object of your love as accom-

plished, amiable, affluent, all that I could desire in a daughter-in-law."

"All that you could desire in a daughter-in-law highly connected as Miss Maitland," persisted her son. "Nevertheless, there are prejudices which neither pecuniary nor personal advantages might enable you to surmount."

"As regards mere worldly distinctions," replied Lady Annesley, with a bitter smile, "I have long ceased to put my trust in coronets."

"There exist many social degrees below nobility," observed Basil, in a faltering voice, "which might serve to put your moderation on this point to the test. Were the object of my affections, for instance, of *Jewish* origin?"

"Even *then*," interrupted Lady Annesley, "if by faith and profession a Christian, I should not presume to raise objections. Listen to me, my son," continued she, in a voice whose subdued mildness was as balm to the ears of Basil.—"Even such a preju-

dice as that to which you allude proved the means of disuniting your unhappy mother from the object of her earliest love—the noblest and best of human kind. A long life of affliction has not sufficed to expiate my weakness, in suffering myself to be torn from his affections, and bestowed upon an honourable man, to whom I dared to give my hand, while my heart remained irrevocably pledged to another. For, oh, Basil! of what faults, what crimes, has not that weakness been the origin!"

The breath of young Annesley grew shorter and shorter with agitation. But he had too deliberately provoked this terrible explanation to shrink from the crisis.

"In my own family," resumed Lady Annesley, in a low but firm voice, "this cruel prejudice produced results equally cruel. The heir of my father's house, my infirm but beloved brother, fell the victim of a struggle arising from the intrusion of my affianced lover under his father's roof. But

nobler victims were yet to be sacrificed. I have told you, Basil—and I trust in your filial affection for credit to my assertion—that the object of my early affection was a man of honour and virtue. The disappointments, the humiliations, the slanders to which he was subjected by the pride of my family, converted these excellences into crimes,—reversed his very nature,—and debased the upright and intelligent youth, burning to devote his talents to the service of his country, into a vindictive and malignant profligate. Driven from England by the tidings of my enforced marriage, he became a wanderer in the East,—hopeless, lawless, reckless;—and, on his return to Europe, laden with the fatal spoils of his prodigious opulence, converted them into means of evil and vengeance. The family of my unfortunate sister, to whose interference and influence he attributed my union with your father, was ruined by his instrumentality: for a dissolute sensualist now

replaced the accomplished scholar, — the gentle friend,—the aspiring philanthropist. And yet, Basil, this corrupt and selfish egotist not only presumed to entertain hopes of rekindling the affection long effaced from my heart by every holiest tie of conjugal and maternal affection,—but those who should have judged me better,—the husband to whom I had been a true and submissive wife,—the family which had witnessed my unswerving career of wifelike devotion,—dared to believe that my heart reverted repiningly to the object of its first attachment!"

The indignation flashing in the fine eyes of Lady Annesley could scarcely fail to provoke corresponding glances in those of her excited son.

"Admit that I was most unhappy," cried she, encouraged by this sympathy to appeal more directly to his feelings. "Thwarted in my early hopes of happiness,—embittered in heart and soul on the threshold of life,—yet having derived fortitude from my sense

of duty to embrace with ardour my appointed destiny,—having learned to venerate and respect the husband allotted to me, and adore the child of which he was the father,—I was once more smitten to the very heart's core by finding myself an object of suspicion,—an object of *slander!* Basil! I was again about to become a mother—*your* mother, my darling son!—when some cruel enemy poisoned your father's heart against me by the most groundless accusations. Persuaded that a visit I had made to Paris in behalf of my unfortunate sister, was a mere pretext for rejoining the once loved being who, at that period, under an assumed name, was outraging, by his vices, all the decencies of society, your unfortunate father denounced me to his family; loaded me with insult and cruelty; then, as if only the more terribly to attest the justice of his accusation, applied for a perilous command in the Peninsula, and died at the head of his regiment, leaving his widow dis-

graced and his orphan son tacitly disowned. Thus, Basil, *thus* were you born to me,—in tears and misery,—an outcast,—a child of shame and remorse;—but, as the Almighty hears and judges me, the child of an irreproachable and spotless mother!"

Already, Basil was at his mother's feet, with her hands clasped between his own, and pressed alternately to his quivering lips and tearful eyes. For many minutes, all he could utter consisted in incoherent tributes of affection to his injured mother, and curses against those whose calumnies had proved so fatally triumphant.

"It was not for me to cherish a single resentful feeling against him who had so cruelly expiated his mistrust," faltered Lady Annesley, in reply to the indignant ejaculations of her son. "The tortures your unfortunate father must have suffered in the belief of my worthlessness, sufficiently atoned for mine! Nor was I blameless, Basil, though innocent of this great offence; for I

had married him from motives of worldly prudence—I had married him to escape from an unhappy home—I had married him without affection—I had married him, with my heart still yearning for another. And when first Sir Bernard Annesley burst into his furious and frantic accusations, this consciousness had so weighed upon my soul as to prevent my replying to his injurious imputations with the open and fearless self-possession of innocence. I knew myself guilty of a fault, though not of the heinous fault cruelly attributed to me by the father of my children."

"It was on these grounds, then, dearest mother," said Basil, anxiously, "that the Annesleys had the audacity to remove my sister from your protection!"

"They did only their duty. Such were the last injunctions of your father!"

"But, surely, the distress into which they saw you plunged at his death, might

have served to satisfy them of your innocence?"

"How were they to distinguish between tears of wounded affection and tears of remorse? If the eye of a husband had been so deceived in his estimate of my feelings, what had I to expect from *them?* They had never loved me. Suspecting, in the first instance, the reluctance with which I had given my hand to Sir Bernard, they had not sufficient greatness of mind to estimate the deep and anxious devotion by which that fault had been redeemed. After ten years of faithful and cheerful submission, they still saw in me the sullen daughter of Lord L——, arming myself by the protection of an honourable husband against the resentments of others. Their duty to the dead was consequently harshly and rigidly performed. In the first agony of my widowhood, my girl was taken from me. I remonstrated, and was loaded with scorn-

ful reproaches. Ah! Basil—Basil!—little can you imagine the bitterness of the tears that fell upon your infant face,—your first sad baptism into the sorrows of human life."

"I can,—I can imagine all you must have suffered, my precious mother!" cried he,—eagerly encircling her with his arms. "Yet let me also dare to hope, that in those early days of affliction your son became your solace? It was for me you lived through your troubles? Yes, it *must* have been for me you lived; for what else on earth had you to care?—*What* remained to you but the helpless infant clinging to your bosom?"

"I did indeed love you tenderly," replied Lady Annesley,—tears of affection stealing for once unrepressed down her pale cheeks. "I loved you as a victim,—I loved you as a comfort,—I loved you as a companion in misfortune. They had torn my first-born from my arms. I knew that my poor Helen

was to be reared among those who would consider it a duty to inspire her with coldness and contempt towards her father's widow. But my babe,—my nursling,—my hopeful boy still remained; and at length I learned to be almost grateful for the vile stigma cast upon him by his dying father, as the means of securing him through life to his mother's embraces. By day, by night, you never quitted my arms. I did indeed cling to you, as all that was left to me on earth! Does your memory carry you back so far, my son, as those days when we were never an hour apart?"

"I remember," faltered Basil, scarcely daring to lift his eyes to his mother's face—"a sudden change—an inexplicable change—after which, I seemed to have become an object almost of loathing in your sight!"

"Alas! my son, "replied Lady Annesley,—"my passionate affection had proved the means of confirming the unjust suspicions of the Annesleys! Contrasting the

submission with which, in my consciousness of helplessness against their authority, I had reconciled myself to their assumption of authority over my girl, with my almost frantic fondness for the poor infant—the only object left for me to love,—they chose to impute this supposed preference to my love for the father, revived in the person of the child!—and in my first interview with the brother of Sir Bernard (the executor of his last will), on my hazarding an earnest appeal to his feelings in behalf of the helpless nephew so shamefully disowned, in whose infant features those of his brother were already developed, he sternly bade me beware of outraging the memory of the dead! 'To this wretched child,' said he, 'the law forces us to concede the name of my brother. But presume not, Madam, to provoke, by further hypocrisy, an exposure of the truth. Let it suffice to the offspring of your shame, that his mother lavishes on his young head the affection she does not even

pretend to profess for her legitimate daughter. The indignant family of the gallant man whom your wantonness has precipitated into an untimely grave, is neither to be deceived nor insulted. Nay, more; though, so long as you refrain from public interference with our plans for your daughter's education and happiness, the interests of Helen will be tenderly cared for,—the moment you abandon the decent retreat into which your remorse has betaken itself, and appear before the world as the virtuous widow of Sir Bernard Annesley, all shall be disclosed; and by the terms of my brother's will, his fortune forfeited in behalf of a public charity.'"

"What insolent tyranny,—what shameful injustice!"—cried Basil, starting up and pacing the room. "For *his* sake, lucky that my uncle is in his grave!"

"I believed, and believe him to have been solely actuated by a sense of justice towards the memory of an injured brother,"

was Lady Annesley's mild reply,—and for Helen's sake I submitted. The dowry, of which Sir Bernard had been unable to deprive me, and which, in virtue of the fortune he had received with me from my father, I felt entitled to accept, was regularly paid me by the executors, and has sufficed, by careful economy, for your education and support in life. All the concession I ever claimed at their hands was, an occasional interview with Helen. But to what purpose? At every fresh meeting I found her little heart growing colder and colder towards me. By degrees, her embraces became formal,—at length, reluctant. I saw that the affections of my child were alienated for ever; and from that moment, so bitter has it been to me to meet her cold and almost contemptuous eyes, that from the period of her marriage I have ceased to claim from her the outward ceremonies of filial duty. Children have been born to her, Basil, whom I have never held in my

arms;—children in whose veins my blood, and yours, and your misjudging father's, is flowing;—yet who will never be more to *us* than the children of the stranger!"

"But this must not be!" cried Basil. "Now that our long protracted explanation has at length taken place,—now that I can judge the full extent of injustice and persecution to which my beloved mother has been subjected, I will no longer endure the contumely heaped upon us both. Be it mine to assert your innocence to these scandalous accusers! Be it mine to attest the unspotted honour of my mother!"

"Alas! my dearest Basil!" cried Lady Annesley, with a mournful gesture of despair,—"who will believe you?—Interested as you are in the attestation, and without means of proof, the attempt would serve only to draw upon you the contempt and persecution of those who have hitherto restrained themselves within bounds of moderation. The Annesleys have left me unmo-

lested to the happy task of presiding over your fortune,—I have never complained.—I am content.—Be submissive and contented in your turn!"

"Contented,—so long as I know there exists a human being who has dared to despise and vilify my mother!"—exclaimed Basil, with generous indignation—"no, no!—they shall retract all their accusations!—they shall replace you in your becoming station!—they shall recognise me,—they shall seek your pardon in contrition and self-abasement——"

"My poor boy!"—interrupted Lady Annesley,—with a melancholy smile,—"I was in hopes the rough schooling of the world had rendered you somewhat less of an enthusiast! *How* are you to achieve all this? By what influence,—by what authority?"

"By the influence of truth!—The cause of the just——"

"The cause of the just!" persisted his mother, again interrupting him,—"has been

for the last five-and-twenty years, a lost cause *for me!* If the agony of my soul, when, emerging in my widow's weeds from the great peril of childbirth, I swore upon my bended knees that I was falsely accused, failed to convince these obdurate people,—what chance that your partial and unsupported pleadings *now* will be more successful?"

"Heavily shall that man account to me,—were he even my sister's husband,—who persists in his incredulity!"—was young Annesley's stern reply.

"God forbid, that I should owe my disculpation to threats or deeds of violence!" retorted Lady Annesley, with equal resolution.—"Already, this unhappy cause has been the means of spilling human blood. Let it sink in the ground and be forgotten, as I shall soon be in my turn. My father, brother, sisters, even poor Nicholas, has departed. May a succeeding generation be happier, and wiser, and more blest in the propitiating mercy of Heaven!"

"So long as you live, mother, so long as you and your children survive, the act of exculpation remains a duty!" exclaimed Basil, for once presuming to resist the authority of his mother.

"Exonerated in *your* eyes, I am satisfied," replied Lady Annesley. "I am sometimes tempted to regard the load of opprobrium under which I have struggled through my latter days, as an act of expiation towards the memory of that noble soldier, of whose services I was the innocent means of depriving his country. In his grave be buried all remembrance of my griefs!—Even to *you*, my only son, I am perhaps unjustifiable in exposing them!"

"My dearest mother!—your sorrows had already received the tribute of my tears," cried Basil, again pressing her hands within his own.—"Already, had I heard the tale of that ill-fated attachment;—already sojourned with you among the fragrant gardens of Cadiz;—already shared your noble resent-

ments when insulted at the Château de Clerval!"

"You know all, then!" cried Lady Annesly, starting from her seat. "Thank Heaven, at least, that though thus mysteriously forestalled in the disclosures, it has not been by the tongue of an enemy; for had you believed me guilty, my own Basil, your hand had not been so fondly clasped in that of your mother."

"I believe, and *know* you to be all that is best and noblest in human nature!" cried her son,—"and will bear witness to it in the face of the assembled world. It was from *him*, mother, I learned the history of your wrongs and misfortunes. It was from *his* lips that——"

"My son," interrupted Lady Annesley, her lips of ashy paleness quivering with emotion—"you deceive yourself, or would deceive me. You were yet a child when that unfortunate man atoned his faults and follies, by an honourable death. Like your father,

Basil, though in a cause less sanctioned, he fell on the field of battle. Enrolled in the imperial army as a volunteer, he perished on the plains of Austerlitz. This—this is all the trace that remains of him on earth!"—she continued, taking from the desk the miniature which, on a former occasion, had excited such agitating surmises in the mind of her son. "Look upon this face, Basil!—Examine the lineaments of this noble countenance, and own that it excuses the early infatuation of your mother!"

As a pretext for averting his eyes from her own, young Annesley gazed for some moments in silence upon the picture; deliberating in what terms to attempt the startling explanations, more than ever indispensable.

"After the warm interest you have avowed in the original of this portrait," said he, at length, in a faltering voice, and without daring to lift his eyes to the face of his mother,—"I scarcely know in what words

to reiterate my assurance that he lives,—that only yesterday my hand was enclasped in his, warm with the throbbing pulses of life and health. He has been,—he is,—my friend,—my guide,—my benefactor. It was from the confessions of Osalez I first learnt to appreciate all the greatness,—all the goodness of my mother! Next to yourself, he is the person who has exercised most influence over the mind and fortunes of your son!"

Lady Annesley clasped her hands together in breathless emotion.

"Do not deceive me, Basil!" cried she. "This suspense is perhaps a greater trial than I can bear! Speak, speak! Let me hear those words again! He *lives*, you say;—he has been your friend?"

"He lives! He is prosperous,—generous,—powerful! His crimes have been bitterly repented, cruelly atoned. Sad as has been your seclusion, mother,—noble, your self-denial,—the expiations of Osalez have

been those of a voluntary martyr. Till he became acquainted with your son, and in affection for *him* re-opened his heart anew to the charities of life, his existence was that of the most miserable of mankind. It is only now that——"

The words were suspended on the lips of Basil Annesley,—for he saw that they were uttered in vain. Overcome by a sudden revulsion of feeling, Lady Annesley had fallen into a state of utter insensibility. Another moment, and he was hanging in anxious terror over the breathless body of his mother.

CHAPTER VIII.

I may not count my sunny days of youth,—
Their brightness dazzles me! Easier the task
To number o'er those cheerless years, whereon
The drizzling rain of sorrow, falling ever,
Made a perpetual atmosphere of clouds,
Worthy the wretch I am!

MASSINGER.

SLOW and painful was the struggle of returning life to that long suffering woman, who had borne the heavy hand of sorrow with more fortitude than she evinced under the reviving touch of comfort and affection. It was in vain that, when gradually satisfied of the accuracy of Basil's strange revelations, she attempted to lessen the force of her previous admissions; and right thankful

was her son that the secrets of her heart had been fully developed, before the startling fact of Osalez's survival imposed discretion on her lips. Basil now knew all. He knew the worst,—and that worst, imposed no insuperable enmity between Lady Annesley and the lover of her youth.

"Thank Heaven," exclaimed he, in the warmth of his heart, "I am able to reconcile my duty to my unfortunate mother, with grateful affection towards the family I have spontaneously adopted as my own. In obtaining justice from my father's representatives, I may also arm myself with the influence and strength of one, whose powerful eloquence and evidence none will gainsay. Osalez is generous. He will not withhold his aid in substantiating the innocence of the woman, over whose happiness through life he has exercised influence so injurious."

On pretence of professional duty, but in reality with the view of hastening to re-

kindle in his sister's heart a sense of duty towards his injured mother, Basil Annesley, after another day at Barlingham spent in mutual confidences, serving only to enhance their mutual affection, hurried back to town. He was eager for a further conference with Osalez—eager for new explanations with Mrs. Verelst,—of whom it had delighted him to hear his mother talk with interest and affection, as the little Rachael—the joy of her father's house, at the happy period when the family of Lord L—— were the guests of the elder Osalez.

But on reaching London, he found that the lapse of those few short days had served only for the creation of new disquietudes. Almost with the celerity and mystery attendant upon the former disappearances of A. O., the little family was once more dispersed. At the earnest invitation of the Marquis of L——, Mrs. Verelst and Salome had consented, it appeared, to accompany

the artist in his expedition to the North; and during their absence, Esther was to remain domesticated with the Branzinis.

"The young lady could scarcely have remained here alone, Sir," observed the confidential butler, in Bernard-street, on noticing the mortified air of Annesley, in whom he now recognised a friend of the family,—"and my master, as you are probably aware, has already quitted England."

"Quitted England!—Mr. Osalez quitted England!" exclaimed Basil, irritated out of all patience by a measure which he was disposed to regard as the result of one of the mysterious caprices of A. O. "And whither is he gone, pray?—To Spain?—to Rome?"

"You will learn, Sir, at his house of business in the city, to which he has ordered all his letters addressed, for transmission to the Continent. But, I rather suspect, Sir, from what I heard from one of

Lord Maitland's discharged servants, that Mr. Osalez has proceeded to Germany."

"To Germany!—Lord Maitland!" again reiterated Basil, in utter amazement; and connecting in his mind the recent insinuations of his mother, concerning his attachment to Lucy, with the former banterings of Abednego on the same subject, he turned peevishly from the door, in terror, lest the mistaken kindness of Osalez should prompt him to an uncalled-for interference on his behalf with Lord Maitland's family.

"On discovering the affections of his niece to be engaged," argued Basil, with himself, "he doubtless began to regret the encouragement he had given to my passion, and, in the kindliness of his heart, will, perhaps, set about compensating my disappointments, by procuring me a wife to whom he intends to supply the fortune so vaunted to my mother by her solicitor! More than once has he alluded to Lucy Maitland's

sentiments in my favour; nay, if I mistake not, such was his pretext for the indulgence shewn towards her parents, and for which John Maitland openly and unreservedly thanked me. What on earth will become of me, should my supposition prove well-founded? — How shall I escape, without having recourse to harshness and discourtesy, an alliance for which Osalez will probably have foreseen and removed every difficulty! Vardyn wrote to my mother as if the preliminaries were actually settled!—I tremble to think of the consequences of the officiousness of this too active friend!"

It was no great sacrifice to young Annesley to proceed to Mr. Osalez's house of business, the road to which was now familiar to him, in order to ascertain the route taken by the traveller. But the information he obtained was far from definite. Osalez had left London in the Antwerp steamer. His letters were to be addressed to Frankfort on theMaine. The length of his absence

was uncertain; and it was supposed that his ultimate destination might be Vienna.

Could Basil have ascertained the exact whereabout of the man of whose mysterious ubiquity he had already obtained such bewildering experience, he would probably have set forth in frustration of projects which were, perhaps, after all, but the coinage of his own excited imagination. But, as so Quixotic an expedition was, for the present, out of the question, he contented himself with obtaining the address of the Frankfort banker to whose care the letters of Osalez were to be addressed, with the intention of explaining himself by readier and more certain means.

On taking up the pen for this purpose, however, so slight were his adducible grounds for the conjectures by which he had suffered himself to be disturbed, that he had not courage to allude to the subject. To decline a wife and fortune which no one might have entertained the least idea of

offering to his acceptance, would afford an endless source of raillery to his sarcastic friend; and, in addressing himself to Osalez, his puerile and selfish anxieties speedily gave way before the influence of those more important interests connected with the fatal name of A. O.

To describe his recent interview with his mother, to avow, with the utmost minuteness, the painful explanations which had ensued between them, and implore, with earnestness, the assistance of Osalez in clearing her injured reputation in the eyes of the Annesley family, and, above all, in those of his alienated sister, became his first duty; and, after having enlarged, in eloquent terms, upon the sufferings and sorrows of the injured recluse of Barlingham Grange, and despatched the letter according to the directions he had received, the mind of Basil Annesley became comparatively tranquil. Had he, instead of indulging in chimerical surmises concerning the journey

of his friend, fulfilled the expectations of Abednego, by proceeding to the house of the Branzinis immediately on learning the dispersion of the family, all had been already explained. Osalez had left no letter for him, simply because convinced that his first object would be a visit to Esther, from whom he would hear the determination of her uncle to exert his interest for the reversal of the decree of banishment issued against the imprudent Verelst.

To his favourite niece, Osalez had confided all his projects. Apprehensive of startling the harassed nerves of his sister, or exciting the too sanguine expectations of his brother-in-law, to *them* he had disclosed nothing. But Esther, who already assumed an almost matronly dignity in his eyes, was aware of his earnest desire to complete the happiness of the little family, by the reunion of Salome with the young Count von Ehrenstein, and the gift of a dowry calculated to efface all irregularities of birth. Previous, however,

to opening the negotiation, it was necessary to remove the civic disabilities of her father; and his object in visiting Frankfort was to secure, in favour of Verelst, the intercession of various foreign ministers to the free city, whom the importance of his financial position had placed in his interest.

Accustomed to study the mountebankeries of human, or rather conventional nature, Abednego was not a little amused at hearing certain of these plenipotentiaries express their regret that he should have taxed their devotion at so low a rate as to require their intercession in favour of so obscure an individual,—a wretched artist,—of no more consequence in the scale of creation, or the eyes of the Hessian Government, than one of the lackeys of their establishment; so little were they capable of surmising, in a half-starved drawing-master of the University of Heidelberg, the brother-in-law of the potent and influential Osalez, whose name was the support of their loans, and whose

word as that of a sovereign prince! Their ignorance was, however, ninety to one in his favour; for, had they been conscious of the nature of his interest in favour of the political delinquent, the importance of their interference would have been of proportionate magnitude. So little, indeed, did he insist upon the cancelment of the decree of banishment issued against the poor artist, that within a week it was placed in his hands, in exchange for a deed of indemnification, by which Osalez became responsible for the offender in the paltry sum of ten thousand thalers, which would probably have been quintupled by the Hessian Government, had his Grand Ducal High Transparency been aware of the relative position of the parties.

To despatch immediate tidings of her father's restoration to his rights to his beloved Esther, was the first impulse of Osalez. But it occurred to him that his mission was only half accomplished; and that the good news would come with a far better grace, if

accompanied with intelligence of his interview with Ehrenstein.

On the young Count, the sentence so ruinous to the prospects of the poor professor, had fallen innocuous.—*He* was not born the subject of the Grand Duchy; and expulsion from the university of Heidelberg in such a cause, inflicted no injury on a young nobleman independent in fortunes as in principles.

But for the displeasure with which his political offence was visited by his widowed mother, the somewhat severe guardian of his minority, he would have seen nothing to regret in the event, save the interruption of his friendship with his good old master, and *more* than friendship with the lovely fellow-student, whose name he dared no longer even mention in presence of his irritated parent.

In the hope that submission might ultimately serve to propitiate the indignation of the irate dowager, the young Count had

in the interim patiently submitted to her caprices,—become the companion of her summer tours, and winter fireside. On the arrival of Osalez at the Schloss von Ehrenstein, (situated a few leagues to the north of Frankfort, a feudal tenure of some moment in more warlike centuries,) he found that the Countess and her son were installed for the summer at the baths of the Taurus; and thither he instantly betook himself;—not a little amused at being thus accidentally included among the flocks of cockney tourists already swarming among other summer insects in the environs of the Rhine.

Years had elapsed since Abednego last visited these beautiful provinces. It was in the van of Napoleon's still victorious army, he had last crossed the "exulting and abounding river,"—then undesecrated by steamboats, and preserving all its majesty of frontier demarcation. Under the influence of navigation-companies and advertis-

ing hotel speculations, all seemed to have subsided into littleness and vulgarity. The very rocks appeared less majestic, and the river less noble, when viewed as the lions of pleasure-parties and the attractions of contract excursions.

But in the interval which had accomplished those superficial changes, what moral transitions had he not witnessed!—the extinction of empires,—the dismemberment of kingdoms,—the annihilation of dynasties,—the downfall of governments. All nations and languages seemed confounded in the memory of Osalez, when he recalled to mind that the Prussia of to-day had been the France of yesterday; that sovereigns now on the throne were at that period wandering exiles; and the sovereigns now wandering in exile, *then* despots on the throne!

By comparison with such vicissitudes, the changes in his own uncertain destinies became of poor account. When he reflected that the mighty army he had seen poured

like a torrent on the Rhenish shores, had subsided into nothingness—that, of the great leaders whose names, at that period, kept provinces in awe, many had sunk into a grave already forgotten,—many lived to survive their immortality,—while a few retained possession of their influence over the public mind, only by serving in their old age a cause which their youth had been devoted to crush and extinguish,—he ceased to wonder at the inconsistencies of his minor career, and began to contemplate with less poignant regret the littleness of the aims and ends to which his great privations, his mighty efforts, had been laboriously directed. Since even potentates were thus baffled,—since even states and empires appeared such futile toys and implements in the disposing hands of Providence,—since the leader of that triumphant army was fated to perish a repining captive on a barren rock, and his future successor on the throne of France a public pensioner, in an obscure

town of Germany,—what right had Abednego Osalez to repine that the representative of the merchant princes of Cadiz should feel doubtful of having his tarnished riches accepted as the dowry of the last remaining scions of his ill-fated race!

"Yet which among these royal mountebanks," murmured he to himself, as his travelling carriage slowly ascended one of the richly-wooded hills of Nassau, "ever enjoyed as I have done the contemplation of nature, or the study of *human* nature?—What pleasure or pastime did their regal grandeurs ensure, in which I have not luxuriated with means and appliances far more exquisite? I have commanded all the transports, secure from all the cares and penalties, of royalty, escaping alike the tedium of a throne and the scorn of dethronement.—There was a time when I ambitioned something beyond these finite sensualities. There was a time when I felt within me the germ of a more glorious greatness,—even

the greatness commanded by mental superiority. But in how many, besides myself, has the germ of genius perished undeveloped, for want of favourable contingencies? High faculty alone does not suffice for glory;—or what names had Bacon and Mirabeau bequeathed to our admiration? Like *them*, I fancied myself born to predominate over the feebler spirits of my contemporaries. Like them, I perceive, in my decline, that moral strength was wanting to fortify those clearer powers of perception and richer stores of information on which I vainly prided myself. The world judged truly of me!—I was not born to be a great man. It was not my Jewish name that betrayed me,—it was my Jewish nature; it was a secret lurking after the thirty pieces of silver; it was an over mercantile estimate of men and things. So long as I can remember, have I measured every object around me by its weight in gold. I thought myself a match for Lord L.'s daugh-

ter,—*because I was rich.* I conceived that I had a right to be listened to in the House of Commons,—*because I was rich.* I fancied myself justified in trampling on the neck of my sister's low-born but high-minded husband,—*because I was rich.* I imagined, that I should reconquer the affections of Sir Bernard Annesley's wife,—*because I was rich!*—But for this inborn vulgarity of nature, I might have become a great man. When trampled upon, I should have turned upon my oppressors with the generous rage of the lion, not with the subtle venom of the serpent;—for though the coil of the boa constrictor may equal the strength of the king of the forest, its triumph is at best only that of an overgrown reptile."

The man who could examine thus searchingly and comment thus sarcastically upon his own condition and motives, was not likely to be more indulgent towards those of other people. Aware that the Maitlands were sojourning at Wiesbaden, he was care-

ful to inscribe himself in the road-books under the travelling name of Clerval, by which he had been naturalized in France, in order to become an unsuspected spectator of the reformation wrought in the habits of the family by the indulgence and exhortations of A. O.

That the leopard should change its spots or the Ethiopian his skin, was, he knew, as reasonable an expectation as for the China-fancier of Arlington-street to renounce the pomps and vanities of life in deference to the exigencies of her position; and it consequently afforded him little surprise when he detected the heartless trifler he had spared, among the most assiduous courtiers of that petty fry of royalty, abounding in every foreign bathing-place, which commands little reverence, save among the lion-and-unicorn worshipping amateurs of Great Britain.

Wherever a royal or Serene Highness was lodged,—wherever a Landgrave or Margrave was taking his bath,—wherever a

Princess or Grand-duchess was improving her digestion or complexion, per force of sulphur, the tall chasseur and showy carriage of Lady Maitland were sure to be in waiting;—and not a sprig of royal or imperial dignity could spend four and twenty hours in the duchy, but, with the vigilance of the police, she managed to detect their arrival, and fasten upon them her officious assiduities. In a place, the sober habits of which secure dispensation from the onerous duties of hospitality, she still persisted in giving dinners. As many, in short, of the costly follies of May Fair as were transportable to the wilds of Nassau, did the idlest of the daughters of vanity continue to cultivate, to the injury of her family and the ridicule of her foreign acquaintance.

It needed only the few words of introduc-duction with which Osalez had been furnished by Esther Verelst, to create an intimacy between her uncle and young Ehrenstein; and too happy was the Count in this

opportunity of obtaining tidings of the family so dear to him, to have leisure for much waste of amazement on finding the girl he had loved in modest obscurity, converted into a wealthy heiress. It was not *that* he cared to learn. All his desire was to know that he was kindly remembered by those he had never forgotten; that his seeming neglects were unvisited by resentment; that Salome was still free to love him, and receive his assurances of undiminished love. Between a nature so frank as his, and a character so decided as that of Osalez, a good understanding was speedily established.

"Yes, I had already heard of you," replied the young Count, in answer to the abrupt interrogations of his new friend. "You are not in my eyes, as you may fancy, an ideal personage, like the *oncle d'Amérique* of a French vaudeville. It could scarcely be otherwise. Admitted as I was to the confidence of your family,—united with poor Verelst by the bond of a

common peril, I could not but hear mention of a certain hard-hearted brother,—the monopolist of his family inheritance,—who had, however, so memorably *abused* his monopoly, that Heaven blessed not his riches with increase. That excellent man fully believed that you had not survived your ruin; but, if still existing, he supposed you to be as necessitous and more afflicted than himself. Under such circumstances he spoke of you with indulgence, and more than once have I heard your name commended, by the faltering lips of his wife, to the mercy and protection of GOD!"

"They were kinder to me, I fear, than I deserved,"—was the candid rejoinder of Abednego.

"Accept, at least, my congratulations that you still survive to become grateful for their moderation," retorted Ehrenstein, more cheerfully. "Allow me even to congratulate *myself* on your resuscitation—rich, conciliating, and indulgent,—to remove perhaps

the only obstacles existing to my perfect happiness in this world! For your openness with me, my dear Sir, calls for perfect candour in return. Know, therefore, that the opposition on my mother's part, the dread of which induced me to suspend all advances towards a reunion with the Verelsts during her lifetime, was likely to arise rather from their want of fortune than want of connexion. My mother is herself the daughter of a Frankfort banker, and has no pretence for demanding from my wife such an addition to the quarterings of the house of Ehrenstein as she herself failed to furnish. My father's marriage was one of the 'acts of fusion' of the policy of Napoleon, in those days of imperial supremacy when he conferred crowns and wives on dukes and barons as carelessly as he mediatized princes, or decimated provinces."

"I might have guessed as much from her hauteur," murmured Abednego, half aside.

"Never did I find a woman of illustrious descent vain of her social distinctions."

"You say truly,"—replied young Ehrenstein, overhearing him. "It is one of the inherent evils of what are termed *mésalliances*, that they engender a false position, equally sure to create moral discords. Blessed, however, on this occasion, be the despotism of the Emperor, since it entitles me to demand the consent of my mother to a marriage which, through *your* liberality, will serve to restore the dignities of our house to a degree of lustre miserably tarnished by the vicissitudes of war, as well as render me the happiest of mankind. The proposal had better, however, originate with yourself. Let me only recommend that you treat with the Countess as if conferring an obligation, rather than seeking a concession. In honest point of fact, the obligation *is* wholly on our side."

On this hint, and armed with the personal introduction of the diplomatic patrons

who had already so efficiently served his cause in other quarters, Osalez hazarded his overtures of alliance to the *guädige Gräfinn*, to whose ears the offer of a dowry of four hundred thousand crowns assumed so miraculous a sound, that it needed financial as well as diplomatic guarantee to convince her of the authenticity of the proposition. No longer did she wonder at the exemplary submission with which her son, abandoning his political visions, had contented himself, for the last two years, with the administration of the Ehrenstein estates, when she found that this propitious alliance had been throughout the ultimate object of his hopes.

All that remained for even the most fastidious and exacting of the family to desire on the occasion, was speedily fulfilled, by a discovery that the generous Osalez had already executed a deed of gift to his brother-in-law and his sister's children, of an estate he had for some years past possessed in the Rheingau, entitling them to

rank among the landed proprietors of the province; and, on their return to Germany, occupy a sphere more consonant with the hereditary fortunes of Mrs. Verelst, and the future prospects of her posterity.

"But now that your betrothment is decided, my dear Ernest, what will you do with your pretty English milédis?" inquired the venerable Countess, jestingly, of her son, as she exchanged a friendly pinch of snuff with Monsieur de Clerval, whose riches rendered him a species of Rübezahl in her eyes,—by way of ratification of their treaty of alliance.

"Bequeath them to your care for the remainder of the bathing season, my good mother," replied young Ehrenstein. "I fear I can be no further useful to them, since you kindly sanction my project of returning to England with our providential friend, to bring you back the best and prettiest of daughters-in-law."

"Pardon me," retorted the shrewd Coun-

tess, with a smile, "I do not accept your legacy. *I* have also my duties to discharge. I must hurry back to Ehrenstein, as becomes a thrifty dowager, and set the old house in order, for the reception of its new *châtelaine*. Impossible to exert myself too much in honour of so auspicious an alliance!"

"In that case you have only to look out for some high-born *chanoinesse*, to take your place in doing the honours of the country to these distinguished strangers," replied her son, scarcely able to repress his delight at the motherly eagerness with which she entered into his prospects of happiness.

"A *chanoinesse?*" retorted the Countess, contemptuously shaking from her withered waxen fingers the remaining grains of Osalez' incomparable Macouba. "My dear son!—you are either the most artful or the most ingenuous of your sex, to affect ignorance that even a Margravine or Grand-duchess would forfeit half her attrac-

tion in the eyes of these ladies, unless endowed with an unmarried son. Do you suppose that a poor old Countess von Ehrenstein would have attracted Milédi Maitland and her daughters to climb up three steep staircases of the Hotel des Quatre Saisons, day after day, unless the heart and coronet of her son and heir had passed for disengaged?"

"Always these Maitlands!" cried Osalez, shrugging his shoulders; "when will my fair countrywomen cease to degrade themselves by their husband-hunting crusades!"

"It is all the fault of your institutions, my good sir," cried the dowager, sententiously; "it is all the fault of your social institutions. In England you limit your daughters to an inheritance so scandalously mean, that none but rich men can afford to seek them in marriage. Rich men naturally exercise the utmost freedom or caprice of choice;—and these poor girls must consequently either remain degraded and broken

spirited, like the merchandise of a slave-market, looked-over, or over-looked, by an ever-varying crowd of purchasers; — or hazard rash efforts in their own favour, still more certain to bring down upon them contempt and mischance."

"Unless," cried Osalez, good humouredly, "they possess a rich and idle uncle, disposed to travel by sea and land,—steamboat and railroad,—in order to stir up the decaying embers of some lukewarm young gentleman's expiring attachment!"

The reply of Ernest von Ehrenstein to this attack was a hearty laugh, and still heartier shake of the hand.

"You must not, however, detain me here longer than the time necessary to remove a few coats of gamboge from my sallow visage, by a round of your Brunnen of Nassau," said he; "for I have another task of a similar nature still hanging on my hands, that will probably require more time and exertion to conclude, than your openness of

heart and hand have rendered requisite on the present occasion."

A speedy departure was accordingly agreed upon. The following week, the Count was to accompany his new relative through Paris back to England; and the dowager proceed homewards, for the joyous task of preparation.

It did not much surprise Osalez that, in the interim, Lady Maitland, on learning from the Countess von Ehrenstein the happy prospects of her son, and that the uncle of the bride—a nabob, a millionaire, a more than *fermier général*—was residing in their hotel, should despatch a most flattering invitation to him, under the name of "Monsieur le Marquis de Clerval, etc., etc., etc;" for that a man rolling in riches could be *less* than a Marquis, in a century when titles may be had for paying for, was scarcely to be supposed.

It was a tempting occasion for the Democritus of Delahay Street to convict the

hypocrisy of the letter addressed to him at his city office the preceding week by Lady Maitland, describing herself as in anxious attendance on a secluded invalid daughter, to one whom she conceived to be as immovable in London, as a limpet on a rock, or the giants in Guildhall.

"Monsieur le Marquis" accordingly hastened to announce his gratified acceptance, and was careful not only to absent himself from Wiesbaden in the interim, but that the Maitlands should hear of him from the pompous old Countess as dining at Monrepos with the Grand Duke of Nassau,—at Amalienbourg with the Grand Duke of Baden,—and, more ennobling than all,—at Frankfort with the Grand Duke of Lucreland—Rothschild the Great.

On the day appointed for the portentous dinner, the two dispirited girls were exhorted to look their best in favour of the bachelor Crœsus, and of the Margraf von Twitterstein-Humberg, Prince and Princess

Adelberg von Schwinken-Schwanken and Grand Marshal Prince Gritten-grettenhoff—whom Lady Maitland had invited, with the Ehrensteins, to do honour to the stranger.

With the exemplary punctuality of continental habits, the illustrious foreign guests assembled in her ladyship's drawing-room, redolent of *cipre* powder and eau de Lubin, exactly ten minutes before the hour named on the card of invitation;—and, as usual on such occasions, these moments of suspense were devoted by the lady of the house to an exposition of the grandeur and consequence of the expected visitor.

The dinner hour struck. Again did the tall chasseur expend an effusion of *eau à parfumez les apartemens*, in an antechamber which a whole Niagara of essences would not have purified of the scent of Dutch tobacco and *soupe aux choux*, in expectation of the tardy guests. But alas! the Marquis de Clerval was still waited for!

At length, when expectation was at its height, and young Ehrenstein, who had now some experience of the caustic and whimsical humour of his new relative, began to apprehend some eccentric retort upon their ostentatious lady hostess, the doors were thrown open, and the attendants of Osalez ostentatiously announced "Monsieur le Marquis de Clerval." With eager delight and smiling graciousness did Lady Maitland instantly rise from her seat to welcome the noble stranger; when to her utter dismay, in his meanest attire, and with his least engaging demeanour, in glided the object of her terror and detestation—the Money-lender, A. O.!

Too late to countermand the preparations of that luxurious banquet!—too late to suppress the evidences of the renewal of her profligate extravagance!—even the place prepared beside her at table for the expected guest must still remain allotted to the being she most dreaded upon earth.

On some occasions tact supplies the place of higher inspirations. No sooner had Lady Maitland recovered herself sufficiently to look her guest in the face, than she saw that whatever his contempt for her hypocrisy, she had nothing to dread from exposure. The laughter lurking in his eyes was not of a malicious nature. He was there simply in answer to her ladyship's ill-advised invitation, and, as her visitor, chose to be accounted one of the most agreeable who had ever figured at her board. To the astonishment of the girls, who saw him for the first time, and knew him by description only as a squalid usurer, the stranger rapidly ingratiated himself with all present, as an accomplished gentleman and well-informed man of the world. Few, indeed, had ever enjoyed such opportunities of instruction and experience; and his former brilliant position at Paris, at an epoch when the reascendant greatness of that mighty capital had been a hidden mystery to German

and English eyes, enabled him to season his conversation with authentic anecdotes of the highest interest, such as rendered Talleyrand an oracle, and still imparts piquancy to the characteristic small-talk of Montroud.

All the honours of the banquet, in short, were for him whom Lady Maitland had heretofore treated as scarcely on a level with the well-liveried helots of her servants' hall.

Before they parted, a single whispered word from her guest sternly inculcated discretion, and promised discretion in return.

"We meet and part, Madam, as strangers," said he; "such is the condition of my forbearance!"

"I had hoped," replied Lady Maitland, trusting to propitiate him by adroit flattery, —"that I had gained a most agreeable acquaintance!"

"Instead of which, you have lost the last shadow of a friend!"—was the grave retort

of her departing guest. "From this moment, expect neither favour nor succour from one who has discovered, as the Marquis de Clerval, all the hollowness of your attestations,—all the falsehood of your promises,—to your gratuitous benefactor—A. O."

CHAPTER IX.

Having seen our state,
Our palaces, our ladies, and our pomp
Of equipage,—our gardens, and our sports,
And heard our music,—are they, simple friend,
As dear to thee as once, and have thy joys
Lost nothing by comparison with ours?

COWPER.

"YOU do not thank me," cried Osalez, placing his hands affectionately on the shoulders of the Count von Ehrenstein, as they stood together the following week in the brightness of a July meridian, on the deck of a powerful steam-vessel, pushing its way through the sparkling waters of the Thames. "You do not thank me for having procured

you one of the finest spectacles in the universe!"

"After the noble shores of our mighty Rhine," replied Ehrenstein, hoping to provoke his pleasant companion into a playful discussion—"you will not surely find much to say in praise of this watery desert? Do you pretend to compare the charm of a few cockney watering-places and citizens' villas with our picturesque rocks and castles?"

"My dear Count, I trouble myself as little with your ruined castles as with yonder green-shuttered nutshells"—replied Osalez, pulling his travelling-cap closer over his eyes, the better to contemplate a noble Indiaman majestically rounding the Nore;—"the spectacle which I am inclined to boast is the vitality of this throbbing artery of our commercial kingdom. Admit that you have seen more shipping in the last half hour than during your whole preceding life! Steam-vessels are scudding past you every minute, such as your Rhenish pro-

vinces would stand on tiptoe to contemplate; and as you approach nearer the metropolis, even your German phlegm will probably be moved with amazement at the stir and bustle of this greatest water-way of the world! I, you know, contemplate such matters with a commercial eye; and I swear to you, that an emperor, surrounded by his glittering court, affords not, in *my* estimation, half so majestic a spectacle as reeking, sooty London, begirt by her restless docks and manufacturing suburbs."

Arrived in town, instead of consigning the young Count, whom he was so desirous to impress with the greatness of England, to his dreary residence in Bernard Street,—a quarter of the town as deserted in the month of July, as a city visited by the plague,—he took up his abode in the sumptuous hotel overlooking London Bridge, to which the everlasting movement and traffic of the river flowing beneath its windows,

supplies an animated panorama, so impressive to the eyes of foreigners.

"Here, indeed, you have a monument to be proud of!" exclaimed Ehrenstein, pointing to the noble bridge of granite, which forms so striking a contrast to the miserable wooden causeways disgracing the Rhine. "What a busy world!—what life,—what activity! We provincials contemplate Frankfort as a commercial town; yet it is as the stillness of Herculaneum compared with this perpetual motion and overwhelming population!"

After thus extorting from his young friend a tribute to the impressive greatness of our metropolitan activity, he chose to contrast the busy quays in which his own far-sighted eye took such keen delight, with the aristocratic mansuetude of Hyde Park; and when at eight o'clock that evening, they sat down to dinner at the Clarendon, Osalez had the satisfaction of hearing from the Count von Ehrenstein as warm a tribute to the charm

of that delightful summer promenade as his petty patriotism could desire. The greensward beside the glassy Serpentine,—the fine old trees,—the fair and graceful equestrians,—the beauty, breeding, and spirit of the horses,—seemed to have bewildered the young German's imagination. His narrow experience had not conceived it possible that so vast a concourse of high-bred loungers could be gathered together, unmolested by popular intrusion.

"There is something almost chivalrous in such a spectacle!" — cried he, with rapture. "At least, it seems to owe its origin to the modernized and civilized spirit of the same *animus* which, in centuries less polished, created the tournament and tilt."

Basil Annesley, who by the earnest invitation of Osalez, occupied a third seat at their table, smiled at the enthusiasm of his young friend, who, since their last parting on the shores of the Neckar, seemed to have lost none of that ardour of spirit which the

cares of life had somewhat abated in his own more sober bosom; and he sat contemplating with envy the glowing cheek and gleaming eyes of Ernest von Ehrenstein, while enlarging upon the merits of the monotonous London ring, as an equestrian promenade worthy of the Elysian Fields.

Alas! the young guardsman, who attributed this fervour of expression to Tedescan exaltation of mind, forgot that Ehrenstein at that moment beheld all he looked upon through the prismatic illusions of happy love;—that to his ear there was music even in the discordant London cries, because on the morrow he was to listen to the voice of Salome;—and that if the grassy ride beside the Serpentine excelled in his estimation the shores of the Rhine or the oaken shades of the Prater, it was because he was to set off at daybreak for L—— Castle,—where, at the express invitation of the amiable Marquis, Ehrenstein was to be united with the younger daughter of Verelst.

That the countenance of poor Basil exhibited so gloomy an expression, arose, on the other hand, from the influence of similar motives. The discontents of his heavy heart rendered it difficult for *him* to praise the climate of a London July, or even do justice to the centaur-like perfection of English horsemanship. He was out of sorts with himself and all the world.

Even to the humorous account given by Osalez of his interview with Lady Maitland, and of the ludicrous *Ko too* paid by that servile *intriguante* to the titled fry, as multitudinous on the Continent as the flies of the plague of Egypt, Basil could scarcely accord the tribute of a smile. When he reflected on the absurd notion he had conceived, only a few weeks before, that his friend's expedition to Germany arose from a disinterested desire to find him a wife in this indiscreet family, he had not courage to join in the general laugh at the expense of Lady Maitland.

"I can scarcely excuse it to my conscience," said Osalez, (after a vain attempt to persuade his German nephew, that curious old Port was a desirable substitute for Asmannhausen,)—"for having deprived those pains-taking misses of their destined prey! Do not flatter yourself, Basil, that *you* are the only little fish which has slipped through their meshes! Know that Ehrenstein, yonder, demure as he looks, has been deluding the Dowager Colonel's Ariadne into the expectation of becoming a Countess of the holy Roman Empire; and I only trust he may be able to give as good a colouring to *his* flirtations to Salome, as you have managed to do to yours, as regards her sister."

A vivid blush rose to Basil Annesley's temples at this reckless allusion; nor was his embarrassment diminished by perceiving, from certain expressions let fall by his young companion, that Ehrenstein conceived he was to make one of their party to L—— Castle.

By way of undeceiving him, Basil hastened to charge him with a message to Verelst.

"But why not tell him all this yourself?" —cried the Count, with joyous pleasantry. "I intend to have no leisure for commissions for many days after my arrival. After three years' absence from those one loves best in the world, who has time to become gossip-bearer to a friend?"

"I suspect poor Verelst will find *as* little, to listen even to the civilities of his favourite pupil,"—added Osalez. "The reversion of his sentence of banishment,—the study and execution of the title-deeds of his new estate,—added to the completion of his engagements with Lord L. preparatory to the arrangements for his homeward journey,—will probably absorb all his attention."

"Too true!" sighed poor Annesley, in reply. "You will all be too happy to think of your absent friends."

"But I do not understand," cried Ehrenstein, in the warmth of his heart, "why you

thus affect to dissever yourself from the family, and place yourself among the spectators. It has been no small enhancement of the joy of my present prospects, my dear Annesley, to know that they included a friend I so much value, in our circle of happiness. That I was about to hail you as a brother, was one among many delights I know to be awaiting me in London."

"Unhappily, I am less fortunate than you suppose," was Basil Annesley's cold and embarrassed reply.

"Unfortunate — unhappy ?—What the deuce is all this about ?" demanded Osalez, in his turn, satisfied that their conversation, in German, was safe as a despatch-box from the comprehension of the two somewhat boozy members of Parliament, who alone disputed with them possession of the coffee-room. "Your face, my dear Basil, is growing as long as a Judge's under his condemning cap!—I trusted to find you, my dear boy,

like the companion of my journey, joyous and alert as a lark."

"*I* have not been enjoying a tour of the Brünnen of Nassau, to quicken my sense of enjoyment," observed Annesley, with undiminished embarrassment of manner. "The only excursion from town I have made since we parted, was to Barlingham; and the gloom of my mother's quiet residence was little likely to remove the depression under which I was labouring when we parted."

"But my dear fellow, since then, you have had three weeks to recover yourself and look about you; and, as we left poor Esther in London, for the express purpose of assisting your enlightenment, I was in hopes that, on my return, I should find you upon velvets, with nothing left for the poor old uncle to do, but bestow his blessing and his money-bags,—if, indeed, you are inclined to complete his happiness by accepting them."

"If *I* am inclined!" burst in a scarcely

intelligible murmur from the lips of young Annesley;—for he began to fancy himself once more a victim to the inexplicable mockeries of A. O.

"It is then as I feared—and your mother is inexorable! — Your mother persists in visiting upon that poor child the errors I have so cruelly expiated!" cried Osalez, in a tone of bitterness. "This accounts for my sister's letter of this morning!—Rachael assures me that my niece has returned to them, instead of the triumphant creature they hoped to welcome,—a broken-hearted invalid!—Basil,—this is your doing!"

"I have not so much as seen Miss Verelst since you left London!" cried Annesley, eagerly.

"Miss Verelst, indeed!—and three weeks in town without an interview, yet affect surprise that she should be ill and unhappy! The Branzinis and San Cataldas, who conveyed her to L—— Castle on their way to a tour of the Highlands, insinuated to her

mother, their fears that your strange alienation was the origin of her illness."

"The San Cataldas?" reiterated Basil, in his turn." "The *Duke* accuse *me* of coldness towards Esther?"

"Let us conclude that it was his *wife;* for you appear strangely inclined to pick a quarrel, this evening, with any man disposed to find fault with your proceedings."

"The wife of the Duke de San Catalda?" exclaimed Annesley, leaning for support against the back of the chair from which he had arisen.

"You have yet, perhaps, to make acquaintance with the Duchess, who was recovering slowly from her confinement when I left town; and had been too great an invalid throughout the spring, I fancy, to appear at her sister, Madame Branzini's parties."

"The Duke di San Catalda actually married to the sister of Madame Branzini!—Blockhead—madman—that I have been!" cried Basil, with sudden enlightenment; and, on explaining to his friend the error into which

he had fallen, Osalez found the mistake so incredible, even with due allowance for the jealous susceptibility of a lover, and the sullen reserve of the English character, that for some time, he still feared Basil must be seeking some plausible apology for his mother's opposition to his marriage with a grandchild of "Osalez the Jew."

The eager entreaties of Basil that he might be permitted to accompany them on their journey the following day, eventually modified his opinion; and right gladly did he assent to a proposal which he knew was alone wanting to complete the happiness of the little family.

"But what pretence have we for proceeding with so enormous a caravan, to the house of a stranger?" inquired the Count von Ehrenstein, with some anxiety.

"We shall soon teach you better notions of English hospitality!" cried Osalez, with a smile. "Lord L——, like the best of friends, and most liberal of men, as he is,

has given me *carte blanche* to make his house my own, (or rather Verelst's,) during his absence from England! The man with whom you saw me walking and talking in the gardens of the Tuilleries, during the half-hour that seemed to make you so impatient, t'other day, when we were passing through Paris, was the Marquis of L——. You admired him, if you remember, as a distinguished and noble-looking man. By to-morrow night, you will be able to decide whether the aspect of his castle pleases you as well as that of his person."

By the morrow night, however, Ehrenstein had other thoughts in his head than of castles or marquises; nor were the ideas of Basil Annesley much more disposed for pedantry of criticism. L—— Castle was Paradise to both.

It is true that, independent of the peculiar charm of the moment, the spot was eminently entitled to be so considered. The stately old mansion, whose venerable

antiquity might have appeared too stern, unless softened down by the sylvan beauty of the surrounding park, on which revolving springs conferred a perpetual renovation of youth and amenity, compelled the Count von Ehrenstein to admit that England can boast her relics of the feudal ages fully rivalling those of his own country. Even the majestic oaks, which, according to a common Teutonic pretension, he had hitherto deemed almost peculiar to Germany, and never more glorious than in his own forests at Ehrenstein, amazed him by their Druidical dignity, amid the noble scenery of L—— Chase.

"You were complaining the other day, my dear Count, as we passed through the Odenwald," cried Osalez, "that the earth was growing bald. What say you to the unrivalled timber of England? Not, I trust, (as the Duke of Rochester once did,) that trees are an excrescence of the earth, provided for the payment of a gentleman's

debts of honour. At all events, if you are still disposed to dispute the palm with us for forest scenery, admit that not even the palaces of the Continent exhibit so exquisite a floral triumph as the conservatories of L—— Castle."

"I admit, certainly, that you do your utmost, perforce of stoves and steam, to remedy the defects of a detestable climate, and evince a laudable zeal in bringing from more favoured regions charming substitutes for the thistles and clover which two out of your three kingdoms have appropriately adopted as indicative of your native Flora! But forgive me for avowing that plants reared with such tremendous outlay of coal and coke, always appear, to my imperfect senses, to smell of smoke, instead of emitting the exquisite fragrance peculiar to our German gardens. And now, my dear sir, that I have said my worst, get you gone, like a dear good uncle, and leave us to enjoy the shade of this delicious shrubbery; or, when

next you pretend to compare L—— Castle to the Garden of Eden, I may chance to compare you to the spirit of mischief, marring the blessedness of its green retreats."

Fortunately, there were "delicious shrubberies" enough in those widely-spreading gardens to favour solitary walks of more than one happy couple. For it was among the grassy knolls and furzy thickets of the domain, that Basil Annesley found occasion and courage to confide to his beloved Esther all the jealous pangs he had endured on her account, from the date of her rash engagement at the Opera, to her intimacy with the family of San Catalda;—how he had loved her,—how he had watched over her,—how he had served her,—when hopeless that circumstances would ever bring about the happy crisis which now seemed likely to unite them by indissoluble ties, needed little probation to render credible;—and now that the seeming caprice of his recent conduct was explained, Esther had no further

scruple in avowing, in her turn, that, from the moment of their childish friendship at Heidelberg, all her hopes of earthly happiness had been concentrated in his affection.

They were very happy, — almost *too* happy,—and never weary of recapitulating, chapter by chapter, the story of their mutual love and mutual misgivings. It is said that lovers are seldom tired of each other's company, because they talk only of themselves; and certain it is that Osalez was more than once tempted to exclaim against their egotism, when, on addressing himself to either of his nieces, as she leaned on the arm of her dear Basil, or dear Ernest, he was sure to find her pursuing the same train of conversation in which he had last left them absorbed,—reminiscences of past distresses, or anticipation of happiness to come.

On such occasions, however, he had a pleasant retreat for his discontent, in the oriel window of the library, commanding one of the finest vistas of the park,—where sat his quiet, gentle, happy sister,—without

a remaining care on earth,—contemplating, with double joy, the beauties of nature through the serene beatitude of her inward soul.

It was to *her* alone that Abednego acknowledged his inquietude, lest the answer despatched by Lady Annesley to her son's application for her consent to his marriage, should be less gracious than he desired; and on the day on which her letter was expected to arrive at the Castle, Mrs. Verelst noticed, with regret, that the trembling of her brother's hands, while attempting to open the post-bag, rendered it necessary for him to delegate his habitual task to the care of servants.

It was an anxious moment for them all, but it *was* but a moment. Scarcely had young Annesley cast his eyes over the momentous letter, bearing the date of "Barlingham Grange," when he started from his chair, and, rushing to Mrs. Verelst, pressed her cold hands to his lips with such eager impetuosity, ere for the first time he ven-

tured to snatch his beloved Esther to his heart, as his affianced wife, that all present recognised in an instant that there existed not the slightest obstacle to his happiness.

On the morrow came a letter from Lady Annesley to Mrs. Verelst, addressing her as the beloved Rachael of former days, and talking of the happiness of "their children" in terms consolatory indeed to the hearts of the whole family.

"Surely," observed Ernest Von Ehrenstein, as he was spending a confidential hour in the picture-gallery beside the easel of his friend Verelst, who had already made him acquainted with the peculiar mystery uniting the destinies of Osalez and the mother of Basil Annesley, — "surely, since this haughty lady exhibits such early symptoms of relenting, at some *future* time, she may be brought to realize, in the autumn of life, the hopes untimely blighted in her spring?"

"If I am any judge of human character, I should say *not*," replied the artist. "It

is something,—nay, *much*,—that Lady Annesley has been brought to consent to the marriage of her son. Further concessions are past praying for."

Nevertheless, when Basil Annesley, tearing himself heroically from the midst of perfect happiness, quitted L—— Castle the following day, announcing a week's absence, Ehrenstein and the two girls (from whom of course one portion of that painful family history had been carefully withheld,) felt convinced that the object of his absence was to attempt a complete reconciliation between the persons dearest to him on earth;—the benefactor to whom he was indebted for the noble fortune settled upon his future wife,—the mother, to whom he was indebted for all beside.

But they were mistaken. The mission of Annesley was to his sister. No longer a boy, he sought the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Vernon with the authority of manhood, and all the firmness created by a sense of injury; and such was the eloquence

derived from these sources, and the still more fervent cry of nature in the hearts of his auditors, that he succeeded in producing in their minds both conviction and repentance.

Now that the uncle, whose prejudices had influenced the youthful feelings of poor Helen against her calumniated mother, was no longer at hand to interpose his vindictive misrepresentations, her ears and heart were opened; and Basil had not only the happiness of being fondly clasped in the arms of his sister, but of proceeding to Barlingham, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Vernon, and their children.

The affecting nature of the meeting that ensued may readily be conjectured; and the exemplary and long suffering mother felt herself nobly rewarded for her patient years of almost cloistral loneliness and privation, by the delight of finding her little grandchildren on her knees, and hearing, in the exclamations of all present, spontaneous testimony to the singular resemblance be-

tween Helen Vernon's handsome boys and their uncle Basil.

So happy, indeed, were Mr. and Mrs. Vernon in this unexpected extension of their domestic sympathies, that it was agreed they should remain the guests of the gratified Lady Annesley during the preparations for Basil's marriage, which was to take place in London previous to the departure of the Verelsts and Ehrensteins for their native country. Already Osalez, with proud consciousness of the embarrassments his presence might occasion, had announced his intention of quitting L—— Castle at the same moment with the Count von Ehrenstein and his bride, in order to start for Spain—a determination secretly approved by the whole family, who felt that overtures for a perfect reconciliation with Lady Annesley would come with a better grace, and to better purpose, at a more remote period.

It was necessary that, in the interim, he should meet Basil Annesley in town, for

the preparation of those marriage settlements, which conferred five thousand per annum on the husband of his favourite niece, and a charming estate in Berkshire, which would eventually assist in placing him in Parliament.

"You need entertain no scruples of delicacy concerning the *origin* of this property, dear Basil," said Osalez,—justly interpreting the blush that rose to the temples of young Annesley when he found himself seated with his old friend, for the discussion of business, in the very chamber in which he had witnessed the hateful interview between Lady Winterfield and A. O. "The fortune I inherited from my father, and which I have a right to bestow upon my father's grandchildren, quadrupled the provision I have been able to make for Esther and Salome; and a more extended acquaintance with the monied world, Basil, will serve to convince you that the foundations of my renovated opulence was with

Osalez the Stockbroker, not with the Money-lender,—A. O."

"I rejoice to hear it—I truly rejoice to hear it!" cried Basil, eagerly.

"And since I know you to be so fastidious on certain points," continued Osalez, in a more subdued tone, "do me the favour, before you leave this house, to cast your eyes over the ledgers which lie open in the adjoining room for your inspection, and which Zebedee, who is in waiting there, will explain; that you may ascertain from the entries the falsehood of the charges of extortion brought against me by such people as Lady Winterfield, Carrington, Loftus, and Co. Though a Money-lender, I have never been an usurer. The transaction which brought us acquainted, Basil, was but the type of my usual dealings. It was only because, relying on a moderate rate of interest, it became necessary to be doubly cautious concerning the validity of securities,—that I obtained the name of a Barabbas."

"I will be content to take your extenuation on your word," was Annesley's grave reply. "The new sight of such documents would be painful to my feelings."

"Well, well,—you shall make a bonfire of them after they have undergone the examination I require of you!"— retorted Osalez; "and the spruce page who ushered you in, (and who looked so grievously disappointed, my dear Basil, that you did not deign to recognise your fellow-labourer in my service, Bill, the street-sweeper of Delahay-street,) shall assist in the operation, always with due reverence to the rights of the Phœnix fire office, and the safety of our neighbours."

Right welcome was the proposal to Basil; and that very day, to the amazement of the impudent clerk, his kingdom, as a money changer, was taken from him, and the landmarks of its frontier destroyed. A still pleasanter moment, however, awaited Basil Annesley when he joined, that day at dinner, in Bernard-street, a circle composed of some of the first mercantile thrones and dominions

of the day; and witnessed anew the respect commanded among them by his new relative. With *them*, however, all the eccentricities of Osalez were laid aside; and Basil was struck with surprise and admiration of the versatility of his nature, while noticing the air of dignified self-possession with which he delivered those political aphorisms which seemed endued with the influence of an Oracle.

From the personal consideration conceded to himself by these worshippers of the golden calf, Basil readily discerned that he was announced to them as the co-heir of the rich Osalez;—and there were moments when the painful knowledge of his family history rendered embarrassing the almost impassioned affection testified towards him by the man who, from the eventful period of his illness in Delahay-street, had really loved him as a son.

As they stood together, side by side, the following week, in the private chapel at L. House, as witnesses to the marriage of the

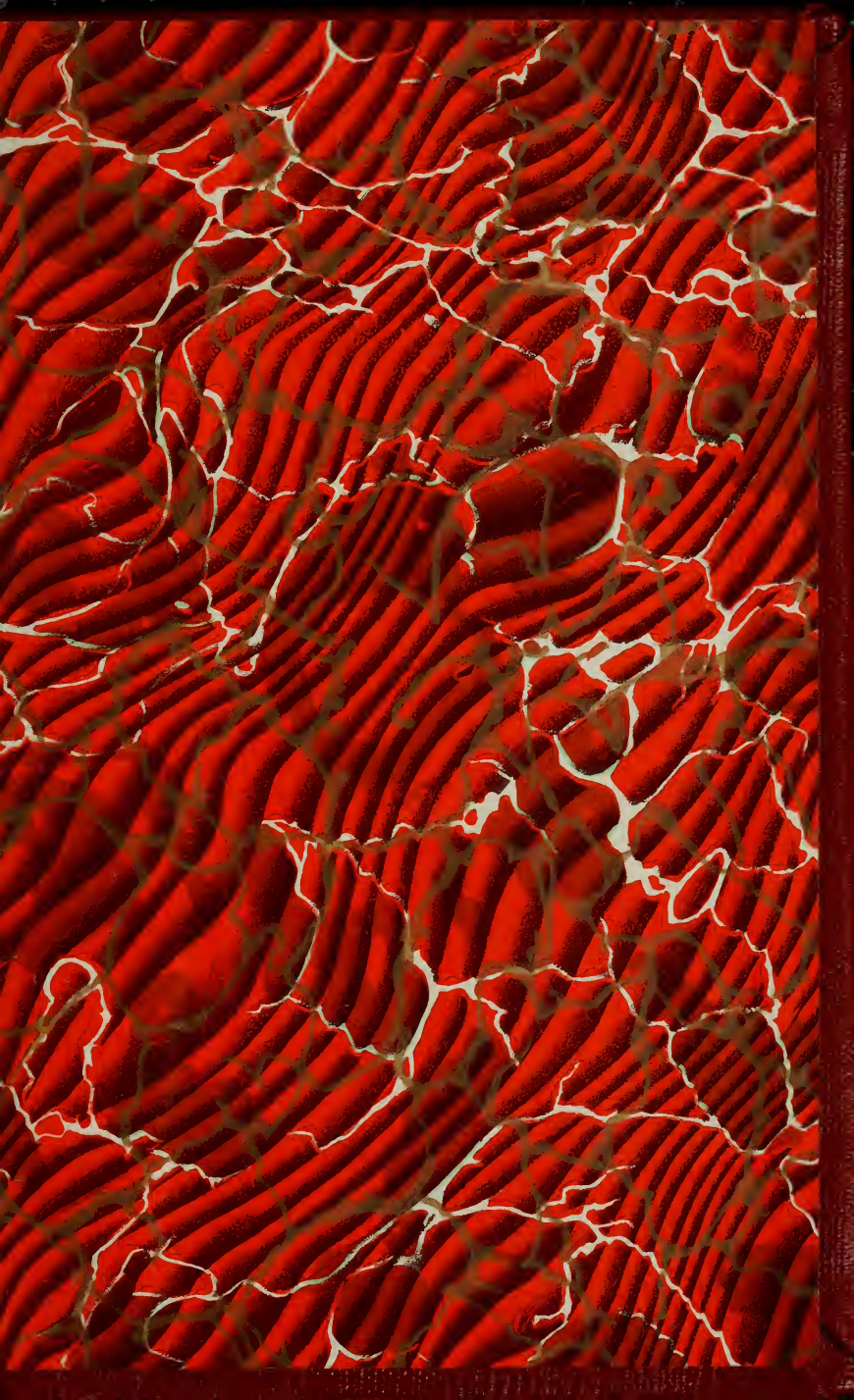
Count von Ehrenstein with the lovely and happy Salome, Basil could not but detect a certain sadness in the countenance of his old friend, which he justly conjectured to arise from the impossibility of performing a kinsman's duty at the solemnization of his own. To so kindly a heart as that of Basil, it was impossible not to express a participation in this regret; and a wish that he would at least find some object for his projected journey less remote and absorbing than a winter at Cadiz.

"It cannot be, my dear boy!" was Abednego's reply. "Do not unman my resolution,—already I am fifty fold happier than I deserve!—With one exception, all my worldly wishes are accomplished;—and but for this single drawback, I should feel myself bound to yet heavier duties of expiation. Surrounded by happy faces and grateful hearts, were I to pretend to the happiness you have in prospect for me, I should not only affix a stigma to a destiny I would fain retain immaculate as yours and your mo-

ther's noble nature, but perhaps forget, in the pride of my heart and the happiness of my family, that I owe peculiar acts of atonement to society for having tarnished by my vindictive spirit, and its cruel influence, the honour of an unblemished family. Henceforward, Basil, all my joy will be in your prosperity. Though you have renounced your profession, as inauspicious to domestic happiness, you must not become an idle man. The cares of your estate will, for the present, interest your attention ; but some years hence, I trust to see you in parliament, realizing the hopes of distinction I was fated to forego. That I may live to see you an honour to your country, and a blessing to the best of mothers, will sufficiently efface from my mind, in my progress to the grave, all the bitterness engendered by the name of Osalez the Jew,—all the repentance connected with the hateful calling of "THE MONEY-LENDER!"

THE END.

T. C. Savill, Printer, 107, St. Martin's Lane.



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